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THE

INFIRMITIES OF GENIUS

ILLUSTRATED

BY REFERRING THE ANOMALIES IN THE LITERARY CHARACTER TO
THE HABITS AND CONSTITUTIONAL PECULIARITIES OF

MEN OF GENIUS.

Richard Robert

BY R. R. MADDEN, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF "TRAVELS IN TURKEY," &c.

Qui ratione corporis non habent, sed cogunt mortalem immortalis, terrestrem æthere equalem prestare industriam.

PLUTARCH, De Sanit. Tuend.

PHILADELPHIA:
PRINTED BY ADAM WALDIE.
1833.

Lit 70.11

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE EARL OF CHARLEVILLE,
WHOSE TASTE FOR LITERATURE
AND
ACQUAINTANCE WITH ALL SUBJECTS
CONNECTED WITH THE HISTORY OF
THE VOTARIES AND VICTIMS OF LITERARY PURSUITS,
TIME HAS NOT IMPAIRED
NOR PLEASURE INTERRUPTED,
THIS ATTEMPT TO ILLUSTRATE
THE CHARACTER OF MEN OF GENIUS,
IS DEDICATED
By His Lordship's most respectful and grateful servant,
THE AUTHOR.

May, 1833.

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THE
INFIRMITIES OF GENIUS.

CHAPTER I.

THE EFFECTS OF LITERARY HABITS.

It is generally admitted that literary men are an irritable race, subject to many infirmities, both of mind and body; that worldly prosperity and domestic happiness are not very often the result of their pursuits.

Eccentricity is the "badge of all their tribe;" and so many errors accompany their career, that fame and frailty would almost seem to be inseparable companions. Perhaps it is wisely ordained that such should be the case, to check the pride of human intellect, and to render those humbler capacities contented with their lot, to whom nature has denied the noblest of her gifts.

It is the unfortunate tendency of literary habits to enamour the studious of the seclusion of the closet, and to render them more conversant with the philosophy and erudition of bygone times, than with the sentiments and feelings of their fellow-men. Their knowledge of the world is, in a great measure, derived from books, not from an acquaintance with its active duties; and the con-

sequence is, that when they venture into its busy haunts, they bring with them a spirit of uncompromising independence, which arrays itself at once against every prejudice they have to encounter: such a spirit is but ill calculated to disarm the hostility of any casual opponent, or in the circle where it is exhibited "to buy golden opinions" of any "sorts of people." If the felicitous example of the poet of the drawing room seduce them into the haunts of fashionable life, they find themselves still less in their element; the effort to support the dignity of genius in a common-place conversation, costs them, perhaps, more fatigue than the composition of half a volume would occasion in their study. Or if any congenial topic engage attention, they may have the good sense to subdue their ardour, and endeavour to assume an awkward air of fashionable nonchalance; they may attempt to be agreeable, they may seem to be at ease, but they are on the stilts of literary abstraction all the time, and they cannot bow them down to kiss the crimson robe of good society with graceful homage. But these are the minor inconveniences that arise from long indulgence in literary habits; the graver ones are those that arise from impaired health and depressed spirits, the inevitable consequences of excessive mental application. Waywardness of temper, testiness of humour and capriciousness of conduct, result from this depression; and under such circumstances the errors of genius are estimated too often by their immediate consequences, without any reference to predisposing causes. The fact is, the carriage of genius is unlikely to conciliate strangers, while its foibles are calculated to weary even friends, and its very glory to make bitter rivals of its contemporaries and comrades. Accordingly we find that its ashes are hardly cold,

before its frailties are raked up from the tomb, and baited at the ring of biography, till the public taste is satiated with the sport. It is only when its competitors are gathered to their fathers, and the ephemeral details of trivial feuds, of petty foibles, and private scandal, are buried with their authors, that the conduct of genius begins to be understood, and its character to be fairly represented.

The luminary itself at last engages that attention which had previously been occupied with the speck upon its disc. It was nearly a quarter of a century before "the malignant principles of Milton" gave the world sufficient time to ascertain there was such a poem in existence as *Paradise Lost*. Only three thousand copies of it were sold in eleven years, while eight thousand copies of a modern novel have been disposed of in as many days; but we need not go back to the age of Milton for evidence of the tardy justice that is done to genius. Ten years ago the indiscretions of Shelley had rendered his name an unmentionable one to ears polite; but there is a reaction in public opinion, and whatever were his follies, his virtues are beginning to be known, and his poetry to be justly appreciated. It unfortunately happens that those who are disqualified by the limits of their capacities for the higher walks of learning, are those who take upon them the arduous duties of the literary Rhadamanthus, and at whose hands the "masters of the world" generally receive the roughest treatment. The competency of such a tribunal, however, must not be questioned, even when a Byron is at its bar: genius has not the privilege of being judged by its peers, for the difficulty would be too great of impaneling a jury of its fellows.

But how few of those who fasten on the infirmities of

great talent, for the purpose of gnawing away its fame,
like those northern insects that prey

“On the brains of the elk till his very last sigh”—

how very few who track the errors of genius to the tomb, take into consideration, or are capable of estimating the influence on the physical and moral constitution of studious habits inordinately pursued, of mental exertion long continued, of bodily exercise perhaps wholly neglected! How little do they know of the morbid sensibility of genius, who mistake its gloom for dreary misanthrophy; or the distempered visions of “a heat oppressed brain,” for impersonated opinions; or the shadows of a sickly dream, for the real sentiments of the heart! How few of the fatal friends who violate the sanctity of private life to minister to the prevailing appetite for literary gossip, ever think of referring the imperfections they drag into public notice, (yet fail not to deplore,) to a temperament deranged by ill regulated, or excessive, mental application, or of attributing “the variable weather of the mind, which clouds without obscuring the reason” of the individual, to the influence of those habits which are so unfavourable to health! Suicide might, indeed, have well had its horrors for that bard, who was even a more sensitive man than “the melancholy Cowley,” when he was informed that one of his best-natured friends was only waiting for the opportunity to write his life. But how devoutly might he have wished that “nature’s copy in him had been eterne,” had he known how many claims were shortly to be preferred to the property of his memory, and how many of those who had crawled into his confidence were to immortalise his errors, and to make

his imperfections so many pegs for disquisitions on perverted talents.

Of all persons who sacrifice their peace for the attainment of notoriety, literary men are most frequently made the subject of biography; but of all are they least fitted for that sort of microscopic biography which consists in the exhibition of the minute details of life. The Pytho-ness, we are told, was but a pitiable object when removed from the inspiration of the tripod, and the man of genius is, perhaps, no less divested of the attributes of his greatness when he is taken from his study, or followed in crowded circles. We naturally desire to know every thing that concerns the character or the general conduct of those whose productions have entertained or instructed us, and we gratify a laudable curiosity when we enquire into their history, and seek to illustrate their writings by the general tenor of their lives and actions. But when biography is made the vehicle, not only of private scandal, but of that minor malignity of truth, which holds, as it were, a magnifying mirror to every naked imperfection of humanity, which possibly had never been discovered had no friendship been violated, no confidence been abused, and no errors exaggerated by the medium through which they have been viewed, it ceases to be a legitimate enquiry into private character, or public conduct, and no infamy is comparable to that of magnifying the faults, or libelling the fame of the illustrious dead.

"Consider," says a learned German, "under how many categories, down to the most impertinent, the world enquires concerning great men, and never wearies striving to represent to itself their whole structure, aspect, procedure outward and inward. Blame not the

world for such curiosity about its great ones ; this comes of the world's old-established necessity to worship. Blame it not, pity it rather with a certain loving respect. Nevertheless, the last stage of human perversion, it has been said, is, when sympathy corrupts itself into envy, and the indestructible interest we take in men's doings has become a joy over their faults and misfortunes ; this is the last and lowest stage—lower than this we cannot go."

In a word, that species of biography which is written for contemporaries, and not for posterity, is worse than worthless. It would be well for the memory of many recent authors, if their injudicious friends had made a simple obituary serve the purpose of a history.

It is rarely the lot of the wayward child of genius to have a Currie for his historian, and hence is it that frailties, which might have awakened sympathy, are now only mooted, to be remembered with abhorrence. It is greatly to be regretted that eminent medical men are not often to be met with qualified, like Dr. Currie, by literary attainments, as well as professional ability, for undertakings of this kind. No class of men have the means of obtaining so intimate a knowledge of human nature, so familiar an acquaintance with the unmasked mind. The secret thoughts of the invalid are as obvious as the symptoms of his disease : there is no deception in the sick chamber ; the veil of the temple is removed, and humanity lies before the attendant, in all its truth, in all its helplessness, and for the honourable physician it lies—if we may be allowed the expression—in all its holiness. No such medical attendant, we venture to assert, ever went through a long life of practice, and had reason to think worse of his fellow-men for the knowledge of

humanity he obtained at the bed-side of the sick. Far from it, the misintelligence, the misapprehension, that in society are the groundless source of the animosities which put even the feelings of the philanthropist to the test, are here unknown ; the only wonder of the physician is, that amidst so much suffering as he is daily called to witness, human nature should be presented to his view in so good, and not unfrequently in so noble, an aspect.

It is not amongst the Harveys, the Hunters, or the Heberdens of our country, or indeed amongst the enlightened physicians of any other, that we must look for the disciples of a gloomy misanthropy.

In spite of all the Rochefoucaults, who have libelled humanity,—in spite of all the cynics, who have snarled at its character, the tendency of the knowledge of our fellow-men, is to make us love mankind. It is to the practical, and thorough knowledge of human nature, which the physician attains by the exercise of his art, that the active benevolence and general liberality, which peculiarly distinguishes the medical profession, is mainly to be attributed. “Do I,” says Zimmerman, “in my medical character feel any malignity or hatred to my species, when I study the nature, and explore the secret causes of those weaknesses and disorders which are incidental to the human frame ; when I examine the subject, and point out, for the general benefit of all mankind as well as for my own satisfaction, all the frail and imperfect parts in the anatomy of the human body ?”

The more extensive our knowledge of human nature is, and the better acquainted we make ourselves with that strong influence which mind and body mutually exert, the greater will be the indulgence towards the errors of our species, and the more will our affections be enlarged.

How slight are those alterations in health—almost imperceptible to the ordinary observer—which have produced or aggravated the gravest mental infirmities ! And how incapable is he of forming a just idea of them, who is unable, not only to detect, but to estimate the importance of those apparently trivial physical derangements with which they are so intimately connected !

It would be a folly to imagine that an ordinary disease exerts such an absolute dominion over the mind, that the moral perceptions are overpowered or perverted, and that the individual ceases to be responsible for his errors. When the intemperate man “puts an enemy into his mouth to steal away his senses,” and under its maddening influence commits a violent assault upon his neighbour, no one doubts but that a state of temporary insanity was productive of the offence ; nevertheless, the offender knew that such insanity was the inevitable consequence of intemperance, and he is punished for it accordingly.

The literary man who indulges in habits prejudicial to his health, cannot be supposed ignorant of the effects that must arise from excessive application ; and who can say he is guiltless of the infirmities he drags upon him ?

There is a case in our criminal records of a thief going out in the middle of the night to rob a hen-roost, and being attacked by a dog, he fired at the animal, and chanced to kill a servant of its owner, who had concealed himself behind the kennel. There was no malice ; the mischief was unpremeditated, but the last degree of violence was incidental to the first, and the law did not hold him guiltless of the murder.

The studious man sets out with stealing an hour or two from his ordinary repose ; sometimes perhaps more ; and finishes by devoting whole nights to his pursuits.

But this nightwork leads to exhaustion, and the universal sense of sinking in every organ that accompanies it, suggests the use of stimulants, most probably of wine; alcohol, however, in some shape or other. And what is the result? Why, the existence that is passed in a constant circle of excitement and exhaustion, is shortened or rendered miserable by such alternations; and the victim becomes accessory to his own sufferings.

These are, indeed, extreme cases, yet are they cases in point; in all, are the offenders held responsible for their crimes or errors, but nevertheless they are entitled to our pity.

In a word, if the literary man consume his strength and spirits in his study, forego all necessary exercise, keep his mind continually on the stretch, and even, at his meals, deprive the digestive organs of that nervous energy which is then essential to their healthy action; if the proteiform symptoms of dyspepsia at last make their appearance, and the innumerable anomalous sufferings which, under the name of nervous and stomachic ailments, derange the viscera, and rack the joints of the invalid; if by constant application, the blood is continually determined to the brain, and the calibre of the vessels enlarged to the extent of causing pressure or effusion in that vital organ; in any case, if the mischief there is allowed to proceed slowly and steadily, perhaps for years, (as in the case of Swift,) giving rise to a long train of nervous miseries—to hypochondria in its gloomiest form, or mania in its wildest mood, or paralysis in the expressionless aspect of fatuity, (that frequent termination of the literary career;)—who can deny that the sufferer has, in a great measure, drawn the evil on himself, but who will not admit that his in-

firmities of mind and body are entitled to indulgence and compassion?

The errors of genius demand no less. "A vigorous mind," says Burke, "is as necessarily accompanied by violent passions, as a great fire with great heat." And to such a mind, whatever be its frailties, the just and the charitable will be inclined to deem it, like poor Burns,

" Misled by fancy's meteor ray,
By passion driven,
But yet the light that led astray
Was light from heaven."

CHAPTER II.

ADVANTAGES OF LITERARY PURSUITS.

A distinction has been made between literary men and men of letters ; the former title has been given to authors, the latter to the general scholar and lover of science.

In these volumes the term literary is applied to all persons who make books the business of their lives, or who are addicted to studious habits; and our observations apply to those who think too much on any subject, whether that subject be connected with legal, polemical, or medical erudition.

Literature of late years has become so general a pursuit, that it is no small stock of knowledge which enables a man to keep pace with public information : go into what society we may, we are sure of meeting some individual with all the honours of recent authorship thick upon them.

It is the purport of this chapter to point out the use and the abuse of studious habits and literary temperaments. Perhaps the greatest of the advantages are those which are least obvious to the observer. It is not denied by many, that every facility afforded to the acquisition of knowledge is an advancement of the public good : and, moreover, an avoidance of the mischief which leisure unoccupied inflicts on life.

But the latter benefit is generally overlooked only because the tendency is natural to underrate the importance of familiar facts. It surely is not the least advantage

of literary employment that it enables us to live in a state of blissful ignorance of our next-door neighbour's fortune, faith, and politics ; that it produces a state of society which admits of no invasion on domestic privacy, and furnishes us with arms against *ennui*, which supersede the necessity of a standing army of elderly female moralists, and domestic politicians. In large cities, at least, literature occupies the ground which politics and scandal keep possession of in small ones ; in the times of Tacitus the evil was common to the communities of both :

“ Vitium parvis magnisque civitatibus commune
Ignorantium et invidiam.”

Leisure, it seems, had no better occupation ere “ the art of multiplying manuscripts through the intervention of machinery” was discovered ; but in these days of book-publishing celebrity, when the press pours volumes on the town with the velocity of Perkins’ steam-gun, one has hardly sufficient leisure to acquire a knowledge even of the names of those “ dread counterfeits” of dead men’s thoughts, which living plagiarism is continually recasting and sending forth. The grand distinction between metropolitan and provincial society, is the dearth of literature in the latter. In country towns every individual has a portion of his time to devote to country politics, or, as he thinks, to the affairs of his country ; and these matters engross too much of his attention to allow him either time or taste for books. If we analyse the bane of all provincial society, the result of the painful investigation is to leave no other ingredients in the crucible of the mind, than politics and scandal. The former is confined to no one portion of country life—it pervades the whole ; it constitutes half the business of existence, it

forms the first of all its recreations, and embroils a neighbourhood of perhaps the kindest hearted beings in perpetual heart-burnings. But however useful and pleasant it may be to devote attention to public matters, to the affairs of kingdoms, or contested counties, to suffer these subjects to absorb all the faculties of the mind, is to indulge in a passion which becomes the pest of society. Politics may be the profession of Mr. Hume, the trade of Mr. Cobbett, the calling of Mr. Hunt, and the clerical vocation of that gentleman who enjoys the enviable title of the Devil's Chaplain; but if we delude ourselves with the idea that we exert any happy influence over our country, or our own peace, by the unceasing agitation of political questions, we have formed a mistaken notion of our duties, as well as of our recreations. It is not to politics we must look for the enjoyment of tranquil leisure, nor from them we are to expect that happiness which in a great degree depends upon ourselves.

“How small of all that human hearts endure,
That part which laws or kings can cause or cure;
Still to ourselves in every place consigned.
Our own felicity we make or find.”

In fact, the domineering passion for politics which so largely prevails in provincial towns, if it deserve the name of a recreation, is one of that sort which his Plutonic majesty may be supposed to feel a peculiar interest in promoting, in those dominions where hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, are presumed to dwell. The tendency of literature, on the other hand, is to turn the current of our thoughts into the more gentle streams of private happiness; and it is literature alone, that can banish the demon of party discord from the social board, where

the sound of politics is the signal for strife; from the private circle, where calumny has been putting "rancours in the vessels of our peace;" and even from the precincts of the boudoir, where the breath of scandal not unfrequently contaminates the rosy atmosphere of love itself. If the tea-table has ceased to be the terrible areopagus of village politics, where private reputation used formerly to be consigned to the tender mercies of maiden gentlewomen and venerable matrons, whose leisure had no other occupation—it is because literature has afforded them an employment more pleasing to themselves, and less injurious to others. It would be idle to expatiate on the good which literary pursuits are calculated to effect in every circle. The country gentleman need not be reminded that literature, of all sports, even when pursued as a mere desultory pastime, is the noblest pleasure that can be chased. The military man is well aware that the days of Ensign Northerton are long gone by, and that it has ceased to be the fashion to shoot maledictions at literature, even through the sides of Homer. The learned professions are no longer ashamed to couple their graver studies with the lighter graces of erudition, whose tendrils may cling around the loftiest branches of science without encumbering its technical attainments. The higher orders are well aware, that when the "blood of all the Howards" cannot ennoble an unenlightened lord, a literary name may afford a title to immortality that any nobleman might be proud to aspire to. The middling classes of society have too much of that "strong, sound, roundabout common sense" which Locke has ascribed to them, to deceive themselves with the pretext that the duties of any avocation are incompatible with literary pursuits, or to need the authority of Seneca for

the conviction that "leisure without books is the sepulture of the living soul." The first advantage of a literary and scientific institution in provincial towns, is the bringing of those together who only require to see one another in the social light of literary intercourse, to esteem each other's worth more highly than individuals of the same community often do.

Nothing tends more to the small sweet courtesies of life than the extension of knowledge, the removal of ignorance and prejudices. "The commonwealth of letters," to use the elegant language of a modern philosopher, "is of no party, and of no nation; it is a pure republic, and always at peace; its shades are disturbed not by domestic malice, or foreign levy; they resound not with the cries of faction, or public animosity; falsehood is the only enemy their inhabitants denounce; Truth, and her minister Reason, is the only guide they follow." In a word, every mode of developing the god-like apprehension which is the connecting medium between mere organic and spiritual existence, is a vindication of our title to immortality, and an evidence of the nobility of that attribute on which we rest our superiority over the brute creation. "It is through literature and science," says Davy, "that we may look forward with confidence to a state of society in which the different orders and classes of men will contribute more effectually to the support of each other than they have hitherto done. Considering and hoping that the human species is capable of becoming more enlightened and more happy, we can only expect that the different parts of the great whole of society should be intimately united by means of knowledge; that they should act as the children of one great Parent, with one determinate end, so that no power may be rendered useless, and no exertions thrown away."

CHAPTER III.

ABUSES OF LITERARY PURSUITS.

The disadvantages of literature, and consequently the advantages of ignorance, are much better understood in Turkish countries, and a more salutary terror entertained of them, than in any Christian clime. But even in the latter, there are many good and able men—amongst whom we are happy to be able to place that very respectable and consistent gentleman, Mr. William Cobbett—who regard the march of intellect with no very favourable eyes, and who think, with the martyr of the gridiron, that the progress of crime is in a direct ratio with the pace of “the schoolmaster,” and that the result of the labours of that great functionary has been neither conducive to the peace of Europe, or the tranquillity of England. If the schoolmaster has been abroad, verily it must be acknowledged, the democrat has followed so closely at his heels, that the energies awakened by the former have been seized on and perverted by the latter. And truly it must be confessed, the benevolent intentions of the schoolmaster have been too often like those of the republican philanthropist towards the needy knife-grinder. The husks of science have been too frequently the only gifts he had to offer, when the popular stomach had need of something more substantial. A famished tailor, to very little purpose, acquires a smattering of geometry; a butcher, of algebra; or any others of the order of “the great unwashed,” of an elementary knowledge of politi-

cal economy ; milliners, to little advantage, may become cunning in conchology ; and even tradesmen when they dunned us, might present themselves at our doors, embodying in their persons all the principles of the exact sciences, and yet derive no benefit from their knowledge of mathematics.

The schoolmaster has indeed been abroad in the lower walks of life, but may he not have commenced, like the Irish tutor, at the wrong end of learning, and launched his raw disciples too soon into the great ocean of erudition, and too prematurely set them afloat, with the promise of a pleasant and profitable voyage ? Such a voyage might be agreeable enough when no perils were at hand ; but "if their poor deluded bark" had to encounter the squalls of party strife and the surge of discontent, like unskilful mariners, they might be likely to hug a rocky shore, and discover, when it was too late, they had been turned adrift without chart or compass to direct or guide them, or enable them to take advantage of the security of good sea room.

This grievous error of the schoolmaster, we apprehend, has had much to do with the ridicule that has been thrown on the march of intellect. The minds of the middling classes may have been prepared for the reception of the elements of scientific knowledge, but not so with the capacities of the lower classes ; useful and agreeable instruction of a literary kind was what was adapted to them, and that precisely which they did not receive.

A society for the diffusion of rational happiness, peaceful, orderly, and contented feelings was the sort of society whose labours might have been useful to the rural population ; these might have tended to have rendered them contented with their lot, while other efforts may

have been only calculated to raise them above it, and even make them dissatisfied with its laborious duties. Of late, however, many cheap productions, combining useful and amusing matter, free from politics, and fitted for their capacities, have sprung up; but it is surprising how few of them have yet made their way into the hands of the peasantry. Were they more generally diffused, it is very probable that the beer-shops with the weekly provision of penny republicanism, those inseparable companions the "Register," and the "Poor Man's Guardian," would lose a great portion of their attraction.

Some paradoxical philosophers have exercised their ingenuity in maintaining that knowledge is a source of misery, and that ignorance is bliss. Solomon himself was not insensible to the "*delitias ineptiarum*;" in the multitude of wisdom, says the wise man, is grief, and he that increaseth wisdom increaseth sorrow. The old Latin axiom will have no great genius free from a dash of insanity. Festus told St. Paul that much learning had made him mad; and Sophocles has lauded the beatitude of ignorance, *nihil scire vita jocundissima*. Machiavel forbade princes to addict themselves to learning. Martial recommends us to break our inkstands, and burn our books; and an ancient physician affirms that the common course of education doth no other than to make the student a learned fool, or a sickly wise man.

There is, however, an observation in the "Adventurer," which, although "a modern instance," is more to the purpose than any of the "old saws" we have just quoted. "If we apply to authors themselves for an account of their state, it will appear very little to deserve envy, for they have been in all ages addicted to complaint, and few have left their names to posterity without some appeal to

future candour from the perverseness of malice of their own times. We have, nevertheless, been inclined to doubt whether authors, however querulous, are in reality more miserable than their fellow-men."

The truth is, the abuses of study are its only disadvantages. St. Austin has well called it "*scientia scientiarum, omni melle dulcior, omni pane suavior, omni vino hilarior.*" No wonder if the student, in the enjoyment of such a pleasure, forget the pangs which over application is sure to entail on the constitution. It is indeed so seductive a pursuit, that the wear and tear of mind and body produce no immediate weariness, and at the moment no apparent ills. But study has no sabbath, the mind of the student has no holiday, "the labour he delights in physics pain;" he works his brain as if its delicate texture was an imperishable material which no excess was capable of injuring. Idleness to him is the *ærgo animi*, the *rubigo ingenii*; but the insidious corrosive of intense thought and incessant study is taken into no account, its certain effects are overlooked because its action at the time is imperceptible. "Surely," says Ficinus, "scholars are the most foolish men in the world; other men look to their tools—a painter will wash his pencil's, a smith will look to his hammer, a husbandman will mind his plough-irons, a huntsman will have a care of his hounds, a musician of his lute—scholars alone neglect that instrument which they daily use, by which they range over the world, and which, by study, is much consumed."

It seems, indeed, little short of madness to neglect that instrument on the condition of whose delicate chords the harmony of every tone of intellect depends, and which, once "jangled out of time and harsh," all

the sweet music of the settled mind is spoiled, perhaps, for ever.

And what is there in the *sanctam insaniam* of genius to enamour us of its gloom, and to walk in the paths of error which lead to it? error *gratissimus mentis* it may be, and seductive as the fascination of passion and poetry can make it, but what is there in the distempered visions of Tasso, Cowper, Collins, Sharpe, or Swift, to reconcile us to the ecstasies of the disordered mind, or to suffer us to persist in the same habits, or continue the same excessive exertions, which disturbed their reason?

So long as life is admitted to be the result of the co-existence of mind and body—so long as we are convinced of the intimacy of their union by the manner in which they reciprocally sympathise with each other—so long as we perceive the powers of the mind augmenting with health, and diminishing with disease—so long as we observe that the mind is incapable of occupation when the body is wearied by violent exercise, and in its turn unfitted for exercise, when the mental powers are fatigued by over exertion of the former—we can arrive but at one conclusion, that the balance of health can be maintained in its natural equilibrium only when mental exertion is proportioned to bodily activity. When this is not the case literary fame is dearly purchased; and all the glory that surrounds it cannot make amends for the health that has been sacrificed for its attainment. “*On est trop savant quand on l’est au dépens de sa santé ; à quoi sert la science sans le bonheur ?*”

In conclusion, there are a few words of Tissot’s which serve the purpose of a summary of the preceding observations. To comprehend the influence of mental labour on physical health, it is only necessary to remem-

ber, in the first place, that the brain is in action when one thinks ; secondly, that the tendency of continual action is to produce fatigue, and that fatigue deranges the functions, because every debilitated organ performs its duties imperfectly and irregularly ; thirdly, that all the nerves proceed from the brain, and precisely from that part of it which is the organ of thought, the common sensorium ; fourthly, that the nerves are one of the most important parts of the human machine, that they are necessary to every function, and that when once their action is deranged, the whole animal economy suffers from that derangement.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NERVOUS ENERGY.

But what is this subtle fluid which exerts so wonderful an influence over mind and body? Under how many names has the knowledge of its nature baffled human enquiry in all ages! and how ignorant still are we of its essence! still it is known to us only by its effects.

We feel when the nervous energy abounds that every thing is well with us; we find when it is deficient that we are depressed; we know if it is exhausted that we become debilitated; and if suddenly destroyed, that death must immediately ensue!

Is it then the vital principle, or the cause of it—or is it indeed the cause of that effect which Brown mistook for animation, when he asserted that irritability was life itself? Motion, no doubt, is the grand characteristic of life; but motion is only the consequence of irritability. The propulsion of the blood is immediately caused by the irritability of the muscular fibres of the heart and its channels; but nature accomplishes all her phenomena by physical agency. To what agent, therefore, are we to refer this irritability, before we arrive at the ultimate cause of life—that *causa causarum* which is God? Is it to electrical agency we are to look for the solution of the mystery? or is there any thing analogous to the principle of life in the phenomena of the electric fluid? The nervous energy, however, is so much a part and parcel of the vital principle, their union is so intimate, that whether they stand in the relation of cause and effect, or are different names only for the same essence, they cannot be

separately considered. The few observations that follow are not altogether irrelevant to the subject of these pages, nor is there any thing beyond the range of legitimate enquiry, in the consideration of the nature of that power which is the source of animation. Were we, indeed, to jump at the summary conclusion, that life is the sum total of the functions, as some have asserted, we should fall into the error of mistaking a subordinate effect for an original cause; forgetting, that although life is co-existent with the developement and cessation of these functions, it is the nervous energy which calls them into action. Whatever be its nature, it is yet an intermediate link, evident, though not obvious in that perpetual chain of cause and effect which is the connecting medium between animation and the great Author of it.

"The first link of that chain," says Darwin, "is riveted to the throne of God, dividing itself into innumerable diverging branches, which, like the nerves arising from the brain, permeate the most minute and most remote extremities of the system, diffusing motion and sensation through the whole.

"As every cause is superior in power to the effect which it has produced, so our idea of the power of the Almighty Creator becomes more elevated and sublime, as we trace the operations of nature from cause to cause; climbing up the links of those chains of beings, till we ascend to the great source of all things."

The doctrine which would have us suppose that this wonderful machine, the human frame, originated in a fortuitous concourse of atoms, has its error in failing to trace the causes of the combination of matter to their remote origin, and therefore chaos and its products are to this system what nature and the results of her well-ordered designs, are to true philosophy. The doctrine we al-

lude to confounds the attributes of mind with the properties of matter, by referring the mental faculties to the aggregation of the functions of the body. This is not only the error of ascribing remote results to their nearest origins, but of referring dissimilar effects to the same immutable cause. This doctrine, like that of Pythagoras, travels in a continual circle of life and death, and the only two truths it admits are,—death, because it is certain and inevitable, and reproduction, because every thing that lives must die and undergo the process of decomposition, before its particles again acquire vitality, and enter into the formation of new compounds.

The whole history of humanity is to this system one series of transformations,

“ Nothing of it that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea change
Into something rare and strange.”

To it, of all abodes, the grave is the most pregnant with vitality; every corse that is consigned to earth, confers life on myriads of other creatures who had not known that enjoyment if death had not occurred. But even though every atom on the surface of the earth may have been a portion of something once living, now inert—though humanity may not shuffle off its “mortal coil,” without peopling the clay which covers it with its spoils, where is the spirit to be sought that animated man—in what unhallowed receptacle has the aura of intellect taken up its abode?

“ Thou apart,
Above, beyond, O tell me, mighty mind,
Where art thou ! shall I dive into the deep,
Call to the sun, or ask the roaring winds,
Where art thou ?”

In this dreary doctrine, trivial truths are curiously con-

sidered, and those of most importance wholly overlooked. It illustrates the horrors of death, and renders the hope of future life a repugnant feeling, a loathsome anticipation. Its lights are like the lamps in sepulchres, they gleam upon the dead, but they give no lustre to the living. That light of life, that god-like apprehension which renders man the monarch of created beings, is wholly lost sight of in the inquiry after the final disposition of the particles of which his body is composed.

Life and death have their analogies for this system, but the spirit of man and immortality have none! There is no link between humanity and heaven! The body is allowed to have its transformations, but the mind is not worthy of a transmigration, not even to be portioned among the worms which have their being in our forms.

By whatever name this vital principle is designated, animus or anima, aura or efflatus, spark or flame, ethereal or celestial, perplexity at every step besets the doctrine of its extinction. And however speciously, and even sincerely, its entertainer may uphold it, still in secret there are, there must be, misgivings of its truth.

“ And yet one doubt

Pursues him still, lest all he cannot die—
Lest that pure breath of life, the spirit of man,
Which God inspired, cannot together perish
With this corporeal clod; then in the grave,
Or in some dismal place, who knows
But he shall die a living death! O thought
Most horrible, if true!”

In a word, the error of this doctrine, like that of many others, is, in attributing obvious effects to their immediate instead of their remote and ultimate cause, and in tracing similitudes in dissimilar analogies.

CHAPTER V.

THE NERVOUS ENERGY.

The nature of this vital fluid has been the enquiry of all ages, and up to the present time it must be admitted that nothing is known of its essence. Its effects, both in animal and vegetable life, have been found in some important respects to be analogous with those of an agent the most wonderful in nature, the most subtile of all fluids, the most powerful of all stimulants in its action on the life, whether of plants or animals—the electric fluid.

Although science (with all the rapidity of its march) has thrown little if any additional light on its phenomena for the last thirty years, yet a few facts have been noticed whose tendency is to show that there is a similitude between the phenomena of the nervous and the electric fluids.

Whenever the properties of the latter shall be better understood than they are at present, in all probability the principle of the nervous energy will be more cognizable to the range (limited as it must necessarily always be) of human knowledge. A day, in all probability, will come when the genius of some future Franklin will make that “fifth element,” and most powerful of all, better known than it now is; and trace the analogies of the subtile spark which pervades all space, with that corporeal fire which fills the nerves with life, and heat, and communicates vitality and vigour, to every fibre of the heart and its remotest vessels. The nature of the nervous energy may

then become better understood, and that invisible aara which fans the blood and invigorates the body, be known to us by something more than its effects.

"In this view," to use the words of one who applied electrical agency to the grandest discoveries of our time, "we do not look to distant ages, or amuse ourselves with brilliant, though delusive dreams, concerning infinite improbability or the annihilation of disease or death. But we reason by analogy from simple facts. We consider only a state of human progression arising out of its present condition; we look for a time that we may reasonably expect, for a bright day of which we already behold the dawn!"

The influence which electricity exerts over vegetable life, till very lately has been overlooked, and even now the same fashion which domineers in academies as well as in boudoirs, has rendered the doctrine of animal, or rather vital electricity, as apparently ridiculous as that of electro-chemical agency was considered, before Davy, by its means, changed the whole face of that science which he so nobly cultivated. Nothing, perhaps, has tended more to the discredit of this theory than the inordinate expectations which medical electricity called forth some forty or fifty years ago, when it was ushered into practice as a universal remedy, and which shared the fate of all new remedies whose powers are over-rated, abused, and ultimately decried. But of late years, on the continent, the influence of the electric fluid on vitality has again forced itself on public attention; and in the south of France we have seen whole vineyards in which numerous electrical conductors were attached to the plants, for the purpose of increasing the progress of vegetation, and of invigorating the vines.

In the same manner does electricity act on the animal body, the circulation being quickened by its stimulus, and the fluids driven through the small capillary vessels with increased velocity. Some recent discoveries of Dr. Wilson Philip have proved that the circulation in the smaller capillary tubes may continue for some hours after death, and that their current in life is not synchronous with that of the heart, and, indeed, that the doctrine of the circulation of the blood is inadequate to the explanation of the phenomenon just mentioned.

The facts that are stated we have no reason to doubt ; on the contrary, further experience will probably tend to corroborate them ; but nothing can be more unsatisfactory than the explanation which is given of the phenomenon.

An observation of Brydone, however, throws no little light on the subject : " If you cause water," he says, " to drop through a small capillary tube, the moment you electrify the tube, the fluid runs in a full stream. Electricity," he adds, " must be considered as the great vivifying principle of nature, by which she carries on most of her operations. It is the most subtle and active of all fluids—it is a kind of soul which pervades and quickens every part of nature. When an equal quantity of electricity is diffused through the air, and over the face of the earth, every thing is calm and quiet, but if by accident one part of matter has acquired a greater quantity than another, the most dreadful consequences ensue before the equilibrium can be restored : nature is convulsed, and thunder, lightning, earthquakes, and whirlwinds ensue."

But it is not the elements only that are thrown into disorder, by these electrical changes in the atmosphere ;

every thing that is organic suffers by them ; the vigour of plants is diminished, the animal functions are disturbed, and the nervous system, of delicate individuals, strangely and unaccountably depressed.

Who has experienced the influence of the sirocco of the south of Europe, the poisonous kamsin of the East, or even the summer southeast wind of our own clime, without feelings of indescribable lassitude, which are not to be accounted for by any alteration in the temperature, but solely to the variation in the quantity of electricity diffused through the atmosphere? In the prevalence of these winds, the air is nearly deprived of it altogether, and the nervous system is simultaneously deprived of its elasticity. In damp weather likewise, when it becomes absorbed by the surrounding humidity, every invalid is well aware how unaccountably dejected his spirits become, and how feebly the various functions of the body are performed, especially those of the digestive organs. This state of morbid irritability of the whole frame continues till the north or west wind, as Brydone has well expressed it, "awakens the activity of the animating power of electricity, which soon restores our energies and enlivens all nature, which seemed to droop and languish in its absence."

In very frosty weather, on the other hand, when the atmosphere is surcharged with electricity, there is a corresponding elevation of spirits, which sometimes amounts to an almost painful state of excitement. In our temperate climate, this phenomenon, perhaps, is seldom experienced, but, in a certain degree, its influence in very cold dry weather is evident enough. On a frosty day, for one melancholy mien we observe, we meet a hundred smiling faces, the hilarity of whose expression

is due to no other cause than that which has been just named. Rousseau has eloquently described the extraordinary elasticity of spirits which he experienced in ascending some of the higher regions of the Alps. Every traveller is aware of the more than usual lively sentiment of existence which he feels within him when he is traversing a lofty mountain.

The painful effects arising from too much electricity in the air, were experienced by Professor Saussure and his companion, while ascending the Alps: they were caught amidst thunder clouds, and were astonished to find their bodies filled with electricity, and every part of them so saturated with it, that spontaneous sparks were emitted with a crackling noise, and the same painful sensations which are felt by those who are electrified by art.

Larrey, in his memoirs of the Russian campaign, mentions his having seen similar effects, from the excess of the electric fluid. On one occasion he says, when the cold was excessive, the manes of the horses were found electrified in a manner similar to that described by Saussure.

Altogether it is truly wonderful that an agent that exerts so powerful an influence on vitality, should have met with so little enquiry from the time of Priestley to that of Davy, or at least that no discovery, except that of electro-chemical agency, should have resulted from any enquiry that may have been attempted. And that wonder is the greater, when we recall the prophetic enthusiasm with which both of those illustrious men, whom we have just named, have spoken of the results which science has to expect from the enlargement of our knowledge of the elements of electricity.

Mr. Faraday, however, we are happy to find, has lately

taken up this neglected branch of science, and made discoveries which are likely to lead to most important results.

Sir Humphry Davy concludes the account of the extraordinary effects he had experienced by the application of electrical agency to chemical action, in these words : " Natural electricity has hitherto been little investigated, except in the case of its evident and powerful concentration in the atmosphere. Its slow and silent operations in every part of the surface of the globe will probably be found more immediately and importantly connected with the order and economy of nature ; and investigation on this subject can hardly fail to enlighten our philosophical systems of the earth, and may possibly place new powers within our reach."

Priestley sums up his opinions on this subject in these emphatic terms :—" Electricity seems to be an inlet into the internal structures of bodies, on which all their sensible properties depend : by pursuing, therefore, this new light, the bounds of natural science may possibly be extended beyond what we now can form any idea of. New worlds may be opened to our view, and the glory of the great Sir Isaac Newton himself may be eclipsed, by a new set of philosophers, in quite a new field of speculation."

Before we conclude this subject, there is a circumstance respecting Davy and his biographer, Dr. Paris, deserving of attention. It appears that Davy, in common with many enlightened philosophers and physicians of the present day, was dissatisfied with the explanation which is commonly given of the physiology of respiration, and the mode in which heat is supposed to be evolved by that process. Where Davy doubted, he was

not a man likely to be stopped in the search of truth, by the jargon of science or the plausible fallacies of physiology. He accordingly applied himself to the discovery of a more satisfactory theory of respiration, and the result of his enquiry was, that *the nervous fluid was identical with electricity*, and that the heat that was supposed to be evolved by the process of respiration, was extricated by electrical agency.

This theory of the identity of the nervous fluid with electricity, we look upon as a conjecture (discovery it cannot be called) which will one day lead to more important results than have arisen from the grandest of his electro-chemical discoveries.

His biographer tells us that "in considering the theory of respiration, Davy supposed that phos-oxygen combined with the venous blood without decomposition; but on reaching the brain that electricity was liberated, which he believed to be identical with the nervous fluid; supposing sensations to be motions of the nervous ether, or light, in the form of electricity exciting the medullary substance of the nerves and brain."

This opinion Dr. Paris calls "a theory which has scarcely a parallel in extravagance and absurdity!!". These are strong terms. Science, we think, should discard the use of harsh ones; but whatever be the fate of this opinion of Davy, the commentary has no parallel in presumption.

The theory of the identity of the nervous and electric fluid may receive little countenance for a time; it may be too much contemned to attract even the notoriety of opposition to its doctrine; it may be buried in oblivion for half a century, but the ghost of this opinion will rise again, though it may not be in judgment against its im-

pugners—their peaceful slumbers will probably be too profound to be incommoded by the resurgam of the opinion they opposed. Perhaps when Davy propounded it, he might have thought like Kepler, “My theory may not be received at present, but posterity will adopt it. I can afford to wait thirty or forty years for the world’s justice, since nature has waited three thousand years for an observer ;” for Davy like Kepler, had his moments of “glorious egotism,” but like the astronomer, he had genius to redeem his vanity.

CHAPTER VI.

INFLUENCE OF STUDIOUS HABITS ON THE DURATION OF LIFE.

It is a question whether different kinds of literary pursuits do not produce different diseases, or at least different modifications of disease ; but there is very little doubt, that a vast difference in the duration of life is to be observed in the various learned professions, and the several directions given to mental application, whether by the cultivation of poetry, the study of the law, the labours of miscellaneous composition, or the abstraction of philosophical enquiries. “Every class of genius,” says D’Israeli, “has distinct habits ; all poets resemble one another, as all painters, and all mathematicians. There is a conformity in the cast of their minds, and the quality of each is distinct from the other ; the very faculty which

fits them for one particular pursuit is just the reverse required for the other."

An excellent old author, who wrote on the diseases of particular avocations about two centuries ago, has spoken in the following terms of the diseases of literary men. "Above all the retainers to learning, the bad influence of study and fatigue falls heaviest upon the writers to books for the public, who seek to immortalise their names: by writers I mean authors of merit, for there are many, from an insatiable itch for notoriety, who patch up indigested medleys, and make abortive rather than mature productions, like those poets who will throw you off a hundred verses, '*Stantes in pede uno*,' as Horace has it. It is your wise and grave authors, day and night, who work for posterity, who wear themselves out with labour. But they are not so much injured by study who only covet to know what others knew before them, and reckon it the best way to make use of other people's madness, as Pliny says of those who do not take the trouble to build new houses, but rather buy and live in those that are built by other people. Many of these professors of learning are subject to diseases peculiar to their respective callings, as your eminent jurists, preachers and philosophers, who spend their lives in public schools."

For the purpose of ascertaining the influence of different studies on the longevity of authors, the tables which follow have been constructed, in which the names and ages of the most celebrated authors in the various departments of literature and science are set down, each list containing twenty names of those individuals who have devoted their lives to a particular pursuit, and excelled in it. No other attention has been given to the selection than that which eminence suggested without

any regard to the ages of those who presented themselves to notice. The object was to give a fair view of the subject, whether it told for or against the opinions that have been expressed in the preceding pages. It must, however, be taken into account, that as we have only given the names of the most celebrated authors, and in the last table those of artists in their different departments, a greater longevity in each pursuit might be inferred from the aggregate of the ages than properly may belong to the general range of life in each pursuit. For example, in moral or natural philosophy, a long life of labour is necessary to enable posterity to judge of the merits of an author; and these are ascertained not only by the value, but also by the amount of his compositions. It is by a series of researches, and re-casts of opinion, that profound truths are arrived at, and by numerous publications that such truths are forced on the public attention. For this a long life is necessary, and it certainly appears from the list that is subjoined, that the vigour of a great intellect is favourable to longevity in every literary pursuit, wherein imagination is seldom called on.

There is another point to be taken into consideration, that the early years of genius are not so often remarkable for precocity, as is commonly supposed, and where it is otherwise, it would seem that the earlier the mental faculties are developed, the sooner the bodily powers begin to fail. It is still the old proverb with such prodigies, "So wise, so young, they say do ne'er live long." Moore says, "the five most remarkable instances of early authorship, are those of Pope, Congreve, Churchill, Chatertton, and Byron." The first of these died in his fifty-sixth year, the second in his fifty-eighth, the third in his

thirty-fourth, "the sleepless boy" committed suicide in his eighteenth, and Byron died in his thirty-seventh year.

Mozart, at the age of three years, began to display astonishing abilities for music, and in the two following years composed some trifling pieces, which his father carefully preserved, and like all prodigies, his career was a short one—he died at thirty-six. Tasso from infancy exhibited such quickness of understanding, that at the age of five he was sent to a Jesuit academy, and two years afterwards recited verses and orations of his own composition; he died at fifty-one. Dermody was employed by his father, who was a schoolmaster, as an assistant in teaching the Latin and Greek languages in his ninth year; he died at twenty-seven. The American prodigy, Lucretia Davidson, was another melancholy instance of precocious genius, and early death. Keats wrote several pieces before he was fifteen, and only reached his twenty-fifth year. The ardour of Dante's temperament, we are told, was manifested in his childhood. The lady he celebrated in his poems under the name of Beatrice, he fell in love with at the age of ten, and his enthusiasm terminated with a life at fifty-six. Schiller, at the age of fourteen, was the author of an epic poem; he died at forty-six. Cowley published a collection of his juvenile poems, called "Poetical Blossoms" at sixteen, and died at sixty-nine.

But it would be useless to enumerate instances in proof of the assertion, that the earlier the developement of the mental faculties, the more speedy the decay of the bodily powers.

CHAPTER VII.

PRECOCIOUS TALENTS.

No common error is attended with worse consequences to the children of genius than the practice of dragging precocious talent into early notice, of encouraging its growth in the hot-bed of parental approbation, and of endeavouring to give the dawning intellect the precocious maturity of that fruit which ripens and rots almost simultaneously. Tissot has admirably pointed out the evils which attend the practice of forcing the youthful intellect. "The effects of study vary," says this author, "according to the age at which it is commenced; long-continued application kills the youthful energies. I have seen children full of spirit attacked by this literary mania beyond their years, and I have foreseen with grief the lot which awaited them; they commenced by being prodigies, and they ended by becoming stupid. The season of youth is consecrated to the exercise of the body, which strengthens it, and not to study, which debilitates and prevents its growth. Nature can never successfully carry on two rapid developements at the same time. When the growth of intellect is too prompt, its faculties are too early developed, and mental application is permitted proportioned to this developement; the body receives no part of it, because the nerves cease to contribute to its energies; the victim becomes exhausted, and eventually dies of some insidious malady. The parents and guardians who encourage or require this forced

application, treat their pupils as gardeners do their plants, who, in trying to produce the first rarities of the season, sacrifice some plants to force others to put forth fruit and flowers which are always of a short duration, and are inferior in every respect to those which come to their maturity at a proper season."

Johnson is, indeed, of opinion, that the early years of distinguished men, when minutely traced, furnish evidence of the same vigour or originality of mind, by which they are celebrated in after life. To a great many memorable instances this observation does not apply, but in the majority it unquestionably holds good, and especially in those instances in which the vigour which Johnson speaks of displays itself in the developement of a taste for general literature, and still more for philosophical enquiries.

Scott's originality was early manifested as a storyteller, and not as a scholar; the twenty-fifth seat at the high school in Edinburgh was no uncommon place for him. Yet was the future writer of romance skilful in the invention and narration of "tales of knight-errantry, and battles, and enchantments!"

"Before seven years of age," says Boccaccio, "when as yet I had met with no stories, was without a master, and hardly knew my letters, I had a natural talent for fiction, and produced some little tales."

Newton, according to his own account, was very inattentive to his studies, and low in his class, but was a great adept at kite-flying, with paper lanterns attached to them to terrify the country people of a dark night with the appearance of comets; and when sent to market with the produce of his mother's farm, was apt to neglect his business, and to ruminate at an inn over the laws of Kepler.

Bentham, we are told, was a remarkably forward youth, reading Rapin's *England* at the age of three years, as an amusement; *Telemachus*, in French, at the age of seven; and at eight the future patriarch of jurisprudence, it appears, was a proficient on the violin.

Buonarroti, while at school, employed every moment he could steal from his studies in drawing.

Professor Lesley, before his twelfth year, had such a talent for calculation, and geometrical exercises, that when introduced to Professor Robinson, and subsequently to Playfair, those gentlemen were struck with the extraordinary powers which he then displayed.

Goethe, in childhood, exhibited a taste for the fine arts; and at the age of eight or nine wrote a short description of twelve scriptural pictures.

Franklin, unconsciously, formed the outline of his future character from the scanty materials of a tallow-chandler's library; and the bias which influenced his after career, he attributes to a perusal in childhood of Defoe's *Essay on Projections*.

All these, with the exception of Scott and Lesley, arrived to extreme old age; but there is nothing in the early indication of the ruling pursuit of their after lives, that was likely to exert an unfavourable influence on health. Those early pursuits were rather recreations than laborious exertions, and far different in their effects from those we have spoken of in the preceding instances of precocious talent. That difference in the various kinds of literary and scientific pursuits, and the influence of each on life, the following tables are intended to exhibit; each list of names, it being remembered, containing twenty names, and the amount at the bottom of each the aggregate of the united ages.

TABLE I.

| NATURAL PHILOSOPHERS. | | | POETS. | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------|--------|----------------|-------------|
| | Name. | Age. | | Name. | Age. |
| 1 | Bacon, R. . . | 78 | | Ariosto . . . | 59 |
| 2 | Buffon . . . | 81 | | Burns . . . | 38 |
| 3 | Copernicus . . | 70 | | Byron . . . | 37 |
| 4 | Cuvier . . . | 64 | | Camoens . . . | 55 |
| 5 | Davy . . . | 51 | | Collins . . . | 56 |
| 6 | Euler . . . | 76 | | Cowley . . . | 49 |
| 7 | Franklin . . . | 85 | | Cowper . . . | 69 |
| 8 | Galileo . . . | 78 | | Dante . . . | 56 |
| 9 | Halley, Dr. . . | 86 | | Dryden . . . | 70 |
| 10 | Herschel . . . | 84 | | Goldsmith . . | 44 |
| 11 | Kepler . . . | 60 | | Gray . . . | 57 |
| 12 | La Lande . . . | 75 | | Metastasio . . | 84 |
| 13 | La Place . . . | 77 | | Milton . . . | 68 |
| 14 | Lowenhoeck . . | 91 | | Petrarch . . . | 68 |
| 15 | Leibnitz . . . | 70 | | Pope . . . | 56 |
| 16 | Linnæus . . . | 72 | | Shenstone . . | 50 |
| 17 | Newton . . . | 84 | | Spenser . . . | 46 |
| 18 | Tycho Brahe . . | 55 | | Tasso . . . | 52 |
| 19 | Whiston . . . | 95 | | Thomson . . . | 48 |
| 20 | Wollaston . . . | 62 | | Young . . . | 84 |
| Total | | <u>1494</u> | Total | | <u>1144</u> |

TABLE II.

| MORAL PHILOSOPHERS. | | | DRAMATISTS. | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------|-------------|
| | Name. | Age. | | Name. | Age. |
| 1 | Bacon . . . | 65 | | Alfieri . . . | 55 |
| 2 | Bayle . . . | 59 | | Corneille . . . | 78 |
| 3 | Berkley, G. . . | 79 | | Goethe . . . | 82 |
| 4 | Condorcet . . . | 51 | | Massinger . . . | 55 |
| 5 | Condillac . . . | 65 | | Marlow . . . | 32 |
| 6 | Descartes . . . | 54 | | Otway . . . | 34 |
| 7 | Diderot . . . | 71 | | Racine . . . | 60 |
| 8 | Ferguson, A. . . | 92 | | Schiller . . . | 46 |
| 9 | Fichte, J. T. . . | 52 | | Shakspeare . . . | 52 |
| 10 | Hartley, D. . . | 52 | | Voltaire . . . | 84 |
| 11 | Helvetius . . . | 57 | | Congreve . . . | 59 |
| 12 | Hobbes . . . | 91 | | Colman, G. . . | 61 |
| 13 | Hume . . . | 65 | | Crebillon . . . | 89 |
| 14 | Kant . . . | 80 | | Cumberland . . . | 80 |
| 15 | Kaimes . . . | 86 | | Farquhar . . . | 30 |
| 16 | Locke . . . | 72 | | Goldoni . . . | 85 |
| 17 | Malebranche . . . | 77 | | Jonson, B. . . | 63 |
| 18 | Reid, T. . . | 86 | | Lope de Vega . . . | 73 |
| 19 | Stewart, D. . . | 75 | | Moliere . . . | 53 |
| 20 | St. Lambert . . . | 88 | | Murphy . . . | 78 |
| | Total | <u>1417</u> | | Total | <u>1249</u> |

TABLE III.

| AUTHORS ON LAW AND JURISPRUDENCE. | | | MISCELLANEOUS AND NOVEL WRITERS. | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| | Name. | Age. | | Name. | Age. |
| 1 | Bentham . . . | 85 | | Cervantes | 70 |
| 2 | Blackstone . . . | 57 | | Le Sage | 80 |
| 3 | Butler, C. . . . | 83 | | Scott | 62 |
| 4 | Coke | 85 | | Fielding | 47 |
| 5 | Erskine | 73 | | Smollet | 51 |
| 6 | Filangieri . . . | 36 | | Rabelais | 70 |
| 7 | Gifford | 48 | | Defoe | 70 |
| 8 | Grotius | 63 | | Ratcliffe | 60 |
| 9 | Hale | 68 | | Richardson | 72 |
| 10 | Holt | 68 | | Sterne | 56 |
| 11 | Littleton | 75 | | Johnson | 75 |
| 12 | Mansfield . . . | 88 | | Addison | 48 |
| 13 | Montesquieu . . | 66 | | Warton | 78 |
| 14 | Redesdale . . . | 82 | | Steele | 59 |
| 15 | Romilly | 61 | | Tickell | 54 |
| 16 | Rolle | 68 | | Montaigne | 60 |
| 17 | Tenterden . . . | 78 | | Bathurst, R. | 84 |
| 18 | Thurlow | 74 | | Thornton | 44 |
| 19 | Vatal | 53 | | Hawkesworth | 59 |
| 20 | Wilmot | 83 | | Hazlitt | 58 |
| | Total | <u>1394</u> | | Total | <u>1257</u> |

TABLE IV.

| AUTHORS ON REVEALED RELIGION. | | AUTHORS ON NATURAL RELIGION. | |
|----------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------|-------------|
| Name. | Age. | Name. | Age. |
| 1 Baxter . . . | 76 | Annett | 55 |
| 2 Bellarmine . . . | 84 | Bolingbroke | 79 |
| 3 Butler, John . . . | 60 | Cardan | 75 |
| 4 Bossuet | 77 | Chubb | 65 |
| 5 Calvin | 56 | Drummond, Sir W. . . | 68 |
| 6 Chillingworth . . . | 43 | Dupuis | 67 |
| 7 Doddridge | 54 | Freret, N. | 61 |
| 8 Fox, G. | 67 | Gibbon | 58 |
| 9 Knox, John . . . | 67 | Herbert, Lord | 68 |
| 10 Lowth | 77 | Jacobi | 56 |
| 11 Luther | 63 | Painé | 72 |
| 12 Massillon | 79 | Pomponatius | 63 |
| 13 Melancthon . . . | 64 | Rousseau | 66 |
| 14 Paley | 63 | Spinoza | 45 |
| 15 Porteus | 77 | St. Pierre | 77 |
| 16 Priestley | 71 | Shaftesbury | 42 |
| 17 Sherlock | 67 | Tindal | 75 |
| 18 Wesley | 88 | Toland | 53 |
| 19 Whitefield | 56 | Vanini | 34 |
| 20 Wycliffe | 61 | Volney | 66 |
| Total | <u>1350</u> | Total | <u>1245</u> |

TABLE V.

| MEDICAL AUTHORS. | | | PHILOLOGISTS. | | |
|------------------|------------------|------|---------------|-------------------|------|
| | Name. | Age. | | Name. | Age. |
| 1 | Brown, J. . . . | 54 | | Bentley | 81 |
| 2 | Corvisart . . . | 66 | | Burton | 64 |
| 3 | Cullen | 78 | | Casaubon | 55 |
| 4 | Darwin | 72 | | Cheke | 44 |
| 5 | Fordyce | 67 | | Hartzheim | 70 |
| 6 | Fothergill . . . | 69 | | Harman, J. . . . | 77 |
| 7 | Gall | 71 | | Heyne | 84 |
| 8 | Gregory, John . | 48 | | Lepsius | 60 |
| 9 | Harvey | 81 | | Parr | 80 |
| 10 | Heberden . . . | 92 | | Pauw | 61 |
| 11 | Hoffman | 83 | | Pighius | 84 |
| 12 | Hunter, J. . . . | 65 | | Porson | 59 |
| 13 | Hunter, W. . . . | 66 | | Raphelengius . . | 59 |
| 14 | Jenner | 75 | | Salmatius | 66 |
| 15 | Mason Good . . | 64 | | Scaliger, J. J. . | 69 |
| 16 | Paracelsus . . . | 43 | | Sigonius | 60 |
| 17 | Pinel | 84 | | Stephens, H. . . | 71 |
| 18 | Sydenham | 66 | | Sylburgius . . . | 51 |
| 19 | Tissot | 70 | | Vossius | 73 |
| 20 | Willis, T. . . . | 54 | | Wolfius | 64 |
| Total | | 1368 | Total | | 1323 |

TABLE VI.

| ARTISTS. | | | MUSICAL COMPOSERS. | | |
|----------|-------------------|-------------|--------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| | Name. | Age. | | Name. | Age. |
| 1 | Bandinelli . . . | 72 | | Arne | 68 |
| 2 | Bernini | 82 | | Bach | 66 |
| 3 | Canova | 65 | | Beethoven | 57 |
| 4 | Donatello . . . | 83 | | Burney | 88 |
| 5 | Flaxman | 71 | | Bull | 41 |
| 6 | Ghiberti | 64 | | Cimarosa | 41 |
| 7 | Giotto | 60 | | Corelli | 60 |
| 8 | Michael Angelo | 96 | | Gluck | 75 |
| 9 | San Sovino . . . | 91 | | Gretry | 72 |
| 10 | Verocchio . . . | 56 | | Handel | 75 |
| 11 | Caracci, A. . . . | 49 | | Haydn | 77 |
| 12 | Claude | 82 | | Kalkbrenner | 51 |
| 13 | David | 76 | | Keiser | 62 |
| 14 | Guido | 67 | | Martini | 78 |
| 15 | Raphael | 37 | | Mozart | 36 |
| 16 | Reynolds | 69 | | Paisello | 75 |
| 17 | Salvator Rosa . . | 58 | | Piccini | 71 |
| 18 | Titian | 96 | | Porpore | 78 |
| 19 | Veronese, Paul | 56 | | Scarlatti | 78 |
| 20 | West | 82 | | Weber | 40 |
| Total | | <u>1412</u> | Total | | <u>1289</u> |

The following is the order of longevity that is exhibited in the various lists, and the average duration of life of the most eminent men, in each pursuit.

| | Average years. | Average years. |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Natural Philosophers | 1494 | 75 |
| Moral Philosophers | 1417 | 70 |
| Sculptors and Painters | 1412 | 70 |
| Authors on Law and Jurisprudence . | 1394 | 69 |
| Medical authors | 1368 | 68 |
| Authors on Revealed Religion . . | 1350 | 67 |
| Philologists | 1323 | 66 |
| Musical Composers | 1284 | 64 |
| Novelists and Miscellaneous authors | 1257 | 62½ |
| Dramatists | 1249 | 62 |
| Authors on Natural Religion . | 1245 | 62 |
| Poets | 1144 | 57 |

CHAPTER VIII.

LONGEVITY OF PHILOSOPHERS, POETS, AND ASTRONOMERS.

From these tables it would appear, that those pursuits in which imagination is largely exerted is unfavourable to longevity. We find the difference between the united ages of twenty natural philosophers, and that of the same number of poets, to be no less than three hundred and sixty years; or in other words, the average of life to be about seventy-five in the one, and fifty-seven in the other.

Natural philosophy has, then, the first place in the list of studies conducive to longevity, and it may therefore be inferred, to tranquillity of mind, and bodily well-being: and poetry appears to occupy the last. Why should this be so? Is natural philosophy a less laborious study, or calls for less profound reflection than poetry? Or is it that the latter is rather a passion than a pursuit, which is not confined to the exertion of a particular faculty, but which demands the exercise of all the faculties, and communicates excitement to all our feelings? Or is it that the throes of imaginative labour are productive of greater exhaustion than those of all the other faculties?

Poetry may be said to be the natural language of the religion of the heart, whose universal worship extends to every object that is beautiful in nature or bright beyond it. But this religion of the heart is the religion of enthusiasm, whose inordinate devotion borders on idolatry, and whose exaltation is followed by the prostration of the strength and spirits.

"Poetry," as Madame De Stael has beautifully expressed it, "is the apotheosis of sentiment." But this deification of sublime conceptions costs the priest of nature not a little for the transfiguration of simple ideas into splendid imagery; no little wear and tear of mind and body, no small outlay of fervid feelings. No trifling expenditure of vital energy is required for the translation of fine thoughts from the regions of earth to those of heaven, and by the time that worlds of invention have been exhausted and new imagined, the poet has commonly abridged his life to immortalise his name. The old metaphysicians had an odd idea of the mental faculties, and especially of imagination, but which is fully as intelligible as any other psychological theory. They believed, we are told by Hibbert, that the soul was attended by three ministering principles—common sense, the moderator, whose duty it was to control the sensorium—memory, the treasurer, whose office it was to retain the image collected by the senses—and fancy, the handmaid of the mind, whose business it was to recall the images which memory retained, and to embody its conceptions in various forms. But as this handmaid was found to be very seldom under the control of the moderator, common sense, they attributed the constant communication between the heart and brain to the agency of the animal spirits which act through the nerves, as couriers between both. At one period conveying delightful intelligence, at other times melancholy tidings, and occasionally altogether misconceiving the object of their embassy. By this means both head and heart were often led astray, and in this confusion of all conceived commands and all concocted spirits—the visions of poets, the dreams of invalids, and the chimeras of superstition, had their origin. The greatest

truths may be approached by the most fanciful vehicles of thought. Be these chimeras engendered where they may, in whatever pursuit the imagination is largely exercised, enthusiasm and sensibility are simultaneously developed, and these are qualities whose growth cannot be allowed to exuberate without becoming unquestionably unfavourable to mental tranquillity, and consequently injurious to health.

„ Again, we find the cool dispassionate enquiries of moral philosophy, which are directed to the nature of the human mind, and to the knowledge of truths whose tendency is to educate the heart by setting bounds to its debasing passions, and to enlarge the mind by giving a fitting scope to its ennobling faculties, are those pursuits which tend to elevate, and at the same time to invigorate, our thoughts, and have no influence but a happy one on life. We need not be surprised to find the moral historians occupying the second place in the list of long-lived authors.

But, if the list of natural philosophers consisted solely of astronomers, the difference would be considerably greater between their ages and those of the poets, for the longevity of professors of this branch of science is truly remarkable. In the *Times Telescope* for 1833, there is a list of all the eminent astronomers, from Thales to those of the last century; and out of eighty-five only twenty-five had died under the age of sixty, five had lived to between ninety and a hundred—eighteen between eighty and ninety—twenty-five between seventy and eighty—seventeen between sixty and seventy—ten between fifty and sixty—five between forty and fifty—and four between thirty and forty. In no other pursuit does the biography of men of genius exhibit a longevity

at all to be compared to this. No other science, indeed, tends so powerfully to raise the mind above those trivial vexations and petty miseries of life, which make the great amount of human evil. No other science is so calculated to spiritualise our faculties, to give a character of serenity to wonder, which never suffers contemplation to grow weary of the objects of its admiration. The tyranny of passion is subdued, the feelings tranquillised; all the trivial concerns of humanity are forgotten when the mind of the astronomer revels in the magnificence of "this most excellent canopy, the air; this brave o'erhanging firmament—this majestical roof, fretted with golden fire;" when he beholds worlds on worlds of diversified forms, rolling in fields of immeasurable space: the planets that encircle the sovereign of our skies; the queen of night, that walks in beauty along the starry plain of heaven, and the innumerable specks, that may be suns to other systems! When he reflects on the display of the Almighty power and wisdom, in the immutability of the laws which regulate the motions of every orb; the wonderful velocity of some planets, and the astonishing precision of the complicated movements of the satellites of others, his faculties are bound up in astonishment and delight; but every emotion of his heart is an act of silent homage to the Author of this stupendous mechanism. Though he advances to the threshold of the temple of celestial knowledge, he knows the precincts which human science cannot pass; reason tells him, these are my limits, "so far may I go but no farther:" but he turns not away like the vain metaphysician, bewildered by fruitless speculations; for the voice of the spirit, that lives and breathes within him, encourages the hope that futurity will unveil the mysteries

which now baffle the comprehension of science and philosophy. There glitters not a star above his head that is not an argument for his *immortality*; there is not a mystery he cannot solve that is not a motive for deserv-
ing it. And to the brightest luminary in the heavens, in the confidence of that immortality, he may say in the beautiful language of Campbell,

“ This spirit shall return to him,
That gave its heavenly spark,
Yet think not, sun, it shall be dim
When thou thyself art dark !
No ; it shall live again, and shine
In bliss unknown to beams of thine,
By him recalled to breath,
Who captive led captivity,
Who robbed the grave of victory,
And took the sting from death.”

CHAPTER IX.

LONGEVITY OF JURISTS AND DRAMATISTS.

The lists of the law authors and the dramatists present a striking contrast in respect of age. Here we find a difference of one hundred and forty-six years: the gentlemen of the gown being so much longer lived than those of the sock and buskin. And here, again, the unfavourable influence of pursuits, in which imagination is largely exercised, is to be observed. Though law has occasionally to do with fiction, it is only in Ireland that it has to deal with fancy; so that the gentlemen of this profession have little to apprehend from the influence we have just spoken of; nevertheless, the result of this calculation in favour of the longevity is what we certainly did not expect. Generally speaking, no professional people have less salubrious countenances, or more of the sickly cast of thought in their complexions, than lawyers; and if Hygæia were to descend upon earth with the emblem of health in her right hand, in quest of half-a-dozen wholesome looking votaries, Westminster-hall is the last place the daughter of Esculapius would think of visiting. That famous letter of Xilander, the lawyer, prefixed to the work of Plembius "*De tuenda valetudine togatorum*," has admirably described the ills and incommodities of that sort of life which the members of the legal profession generally lead. The work is so rare in this country, that we have been induced to transcribe the greater portion of the prefatory epistle. "I readily

comply with your request, and willingly proceed to relate those infirmities and obstacles to health which seem most to follow the bustling life we lawyers are wont to lead, that you may be able to lay down for us more accurate rules and modes of managing our health, in the treatise you are about to publish on the disorders of the members of our profession.

“ A country life is not only more agreeable but more healthful than that spent in town, in the discharge of public duties, which drag peculiar diseases after them. Stomachic and nephritic affections, and innumerable other ills that follow in their train, are the consequences of the sedentary habits of our city life. The source of all our disorders is easily traced ; that which murders us is the constant sitting that is unavoidable in our professions ! we sit whole days like lame cobblers, either at home or in the courts of justice ; and when the meanest fellow in the state is either exercising his body, or unbending his mind, we must be in the midst of wrangling disputations.

“ Though the condition of all men too busily employed is miserable, yet are they most miserable who have not leisure to mind their own affairs. The torment of the constant babbling in the courts is pleasantly set forth in that old play, where one complains to Hercules,—‘ You know what wretchedness I underwent when I was forced to hear the lawyers plead. Had you been compelled to listen to them, with all your courage you would rather have wished yourself employed in cleansing the Augean stable.’

“ It is an ugly custom we have brought into use of getting into a coach every foot we have to go : if we did but walk the fourth part of the distance that we ride in a day, the evils of our sedentary habits might be greatly

obviated by such exercise. But the world is come to this pass, that we seem to have lost the use of our feet, and doubtless you will think it necessary to recommend our ancient method of perambulating.

“Martial thought it madness for a hale young man to walk through the town on the feet of a quadruped. Another of our disadvantages is, that our doors are beset continually by a crowd of people. The most disputatious pettifoggers, and brawlers by profession, are ever teasing us with their outrageous jargon of the law. Now Seneca says a man cannot be happy in the midst of many people, for it fares with him as it does with a tranquil lake, which is generally disturbed by visitors.

“Another unseasonable annoyance of ours, is to be interrupted in our meals by business; and Hippocrates condemns all study soon after meals, especially in those of a bad digestion. So taken up are we—what with the contentions of our clients, our own incessant cogitations, and daily attendance in courts and chambers, that we have no leisure to unbend our mind or to act the part of plain simple men in private life, but are obliged to personate a certain character; for our profession obliges us to be constantly observant of our steps. But as the philosopher again remarks—‘those who exist under a mask cannot be said to lead pleasant lives,’ for the pleasure of life consists in that open, sincere simplicity of mind and manner, that rather shuns than seeks observation.

“As for my way of living, it inclines to no extreme: a spare diet is perhaps fittest for the life we lead, for Celsus wrote not for us when he said, that men should eat much meat—though he subjoins the caution—provided they can digest it. Though we are not great banqueters in general, yet sometimes we give way to jollity

in company, and mingle our wisdom with wine, without observing the nice limits of sobriety. But how far these things are to be allowed or avoided ;—how far it may be advisable to exercise the body, to correct the evils of repletion, to walk in the free air to expand the chest with plentiful breathings ; how far it may be necessary occasionally to change scene or climate to renovate our strength and spirits—these are things in which we expect to be directed by your wisdom. Truly, it is most reasonable to advise us to take air and exercise, and to recreate our minds : holidays were set apart by public authority for that purpose. But we are like slaves, who have no remission from labour ; on some festivals, indeed, we alternate our toil, but we do not lay it aside ; we must attend to business in some shape or other, whether in listening to depositions abroad, or in giving opinions at home ; we are like the persons described by Euripides—we are the slaves of the public, and our lives are in the hands of the people.

“ Let us profit by the melancholy example of those who have tarried too long on the bench, or at the bar ; and as years gain on us let us contract our toils, and secure an honest retreat for our old age, for its latter days are the lawyer's only holidays. In proper time, let us bid our long farewell to the bench and to the court.

“ The first and middle terms of existence we sacrifice to the public—why should we not bestow the latter on ourselves ? Let us take in due time the counsel of the Roman :—Pack up our awls at the approach of old age—and having lived in straits the greater portion of our days, let us die in harbour.”

Such is the *Sieur Xilander's* account of the toils of the profession of which he was a distinguished member.

But with all its labours, we find that our list of eminent lawyers indicates a length of life considerably greater than that of the imaginative pursuits of the poets, dramatists, novelists, and musical composers.

The distinction has been made between dramatists and poets, because the most numerous instances of advanced age are found amongst the former. The toils of the dramatist and those of the general poet are of a very different character ; every dramatist, indeed, must be a poet, but many of the greatest poets have proved very indifferent dramatists. The list of the latter gives an amount of one hundred and five years more than the poets, and that of the dramatists two hundred and fifty-five years less than the natural philosophers. Though the difficulty of succeeding in this branch of poetry is infinitely greater than in any other, and imagination in no small degree is essential to its successful cultivation, it is still to a happy combination of other qualities, and the exercise of other and more sober faculties, that this art is indebted for success. The business of the dramatist is to realise the images of fancy, to clothe the airy conceptions of poetry in the garb of real life.

The aim of tragedy is to give breath and animation to exalted sentiments, to bring the dim shadows of imagination into being, and give to legendary exploits the vivid character of actual events. The office of Comedy, on the other hand, is to catch the living manners as they rise, to place the peculiarities of national character in their strongest light, to make the follies of the time the food of wit, and in the correction of malevolent absurdity to make ridicule do that for which reason may not be appealed to. In a word, to mingle mirth with morals, "to hold the mirror up to nature, to

show virtue her own image, vice her own deformity, the very age and body of the time, its form and pressure."

That the labours of dramatic composition have not the same depressing influence on the energies of life as those of the other branches of poetry, may be inferred from the astonishing fertility of dramatic invention, and likewise of the longevity of many of its authors. Lope de Vega is said to have written eighteen hundred pieces for the theatre; forty-seven quarto volumes of his works are extant, twenty-five of which are composed of dramas: he died of hypochondria in his seventy-third year; and little is it to be wondered at, that the literary malady should have closed the career of so voluminous an author. Goldoni wrote two hundred plays, which are published in thirty-one octavo volumes. Had Shakespeare attained the age of Goldoni, he would probably have been as prolific an author;—thirty-seven dramas have immortalised his short career, and these productions have to boast of a fate which those of no other dramatist, ancient or modern, ever met with. After an interval of two hundred years, five-and-twenty of his pieces still keep possession of the stage.

CHAPTER X.

LONGEVITY OF MEDICAL AUTHORS, AND MISCELLANEOUS
WRITERS.

The amount of the united ages of the medical authors exceeds that of the novelists and essayists by one hundred and twelve years ; and here again, the authors "of imagination all compact" are found very nearly at the bottom of the list, while those, into whose pursuits imagination little enters, in point of longevity rank high above them. It may be truly said, without any hyperbole, that every pursuit which ennobles the mind, has a tendency to invigorate the body, and by its tranquillising influence, to add to the duration of life.

That study which carries the contemplation of its followers to the highest regions of philosophy, we have already seen, is the pursuit, of all others, the most conducive to longevity. But the mechanism of the heavens is only more wonderful than that of the human form, because the magnitude of the scale on which the movements of that mechanism are carried on, require the greatest effort which the mind is capable of making, even imperfectly to conceive. But what is there more wonderful in the laws which regulate the motions of innumerable worlds, than that principle of life which animates the dust of which one human being is compounded ? What is there more stupendous in the idea of the power that gives precision, velocity, and effulgence to the swiftest and the brightest of those orbs,

than in the conception of that power, which bestows the spirit of vitality and the attribute of reason on man? Infinite wisdom is only differently displayed; it matters not how, whether in the revolutions of the planets, or the circulation of the blood, in the transmission of solar light and heat, or in the mechanism of the eye, or the sensibility of the nerves, the enquiring mind is ultimately carried to the same creative power. But above all philosophers, to the medical observer what a miracle of wisdom is the formation of the human body, and the wonderful faculties superadded to its organisation! "What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! In form and moving how express and admirable! In action, how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a God! The beauty of the world! The paragon of animals!" In a word, the tendency of the pursuits of the physician is to enlarge his understanding, and to enlighten his views on every subject to which they are directed.

The list of miscellaneous writers is equally divided between the novelist and essayist. The former, whom we may consider as the regular practitioners of literature, appear to enjoy a greater length of days than their periodical brethren who cannot boast the voluminous dignity of the acknowledged novelist. The result, however, shows that the compulsory toil of periodical composition has a greater influence on health than voluntary labours to a far greater amount. This opinion is corroborated by an observation of Dr. Johnson, no mean authority on any subject connected with literary history. "He that condemns himself to compose on a stated day, will often bring to his task an attention dissipated, a memory embarrassed, a mind distracted with

anxieties, a body languishing with disease; he will labour on a barren topic till it is too late to change it; for in the ardour of invention, his thoughts become diffused into a wild exuberance which the pressing hour of publication cannot suffer judgment to examine or reduce." There is, indeed, no labour more destructive to health, than that of periodical literature, and in no species of mental application, or even of manual employment, is the wear and tear of mind and body so early and so severely felt. The readers of those light articles which appear to cost so little labour in the various literary publications of the day, are little aware now many constitutions are broken down in the service of their literary taste.

But with the novelist, it is far different; they have their attention devoted, perhaps for months, to one continued subject, and that subject neither dry nor disagreeable. They have no laborious references to make to other books, they have to burthen their memories with no authorities for their opinions, nor to trouble their brain with the connection of any lengthened chain of ratiocination. They have but to knock at the door of their imagination to call forth its phantasies, and if the power of genius is present, "to collect, combine, amplify, and animate" the ideas these phantasies suggest; which, after all, are the creations of that faculty "without which judgment is cold, and knowledge is inert." To weave these phantasies into fiction, to call new worlds of imaginary being into existence, to endow an Anastasius or a Corinne with thoughts that breathe and words that burn, to picture a Rebecca, gazing from her dizzy casement on the tide of battle rolling beneath the castle walls, to bring the very spot to the mind's

eye, where "death has broken the strong man's spear, and overtaken the speed of his war-horse:"—to invest the soldier of the cross, in his panoply of steel; like Cervantes, to carry the exaltation of knight-errantry to the extremest verge of credible absurdity, to array it against windmills; to couch the lance of the cavalier, and send his gallant steed against an army of soldadoes, or a flock of sheep, or to give the shadowy forms of mental entrancement a spiritualised being, made up of beauty and romance, or of baleful passions—a Flora M'Ivor or a haggard Elspeth :—this is the business of the novelist, and it must be allowed no unpleasing occupation is it.

So far as the labour we delight in physics pain, pleasant unquestionably it is, but light and amusing as it may seem, still is it laborious.

The author of the Rambler has justly observed, it is no unpleasing employment "to write when one sentiment readily produces another, and both ideas and expression present themselves at the first summons; but such happiness the greatest genius does not always attain, and common writers know it only to such a degree as to credit its possibility." In fact, there is no man, however great his powers, to whom extensive composition is not a serious labour; and in fiction, those productions, like Sterne's, which seem to be the very outpourings of the mind, are generally those which cost the greatest effort.

The most accurate observer of nature, is generally the most painful thinker; the deepest thinker is seldom the best talker; and he whose memory draws least on his own imagination, (paradoxical as it may seem,) is often the most fluent writer. "Those animals," says

Bacon, "which are the swiftest in the course are nimblest in the turn."

But the great evil of every department of literature which deals in fiction, is the habit the imagination acquires of domineering over sober judgment.

"In time," says the great moralist, "when some particular train of ideas has fixed the attention, all other intellectual gratifications are rejected, the mind, in weariness or leisure, recurs constantly to the favourite conception, and feasts on the luscious falsehood, whenever she is offended with the bitterness of truth. By degrees the reign of fancy is confirmed. She grows first imperious, and in time despotic. Then fiction begins to operate as reality, false opinions fasten on the mind, and life passes in dreams of rapture or anguish."

Such is the progress, but its origin is in the infatuation of the pursuits which draw him into labour beyond his strength, and causes a prolonged application to composition, because the interest of the subject renders the mind insensible to fatigue. Scott seldom exceeded fifteen pages a day, but even this for a continuance was a toilsome task, that would have broken down the health of any other constitution at a much earlier period. Byron, in his journal, says he wrote an entire poem, and one of considerable length, in four days, to banish the dreadful impression of a dream—an exertion of mind and body which appears almost incredible.

Pope boasts in one of his letters of having finished fifty lines of his "Homer" in one day; and it would appear to be the largest number he had accomplished.

Cowper, however, in his blank verse translation of the same author, for some time was in the habit of doing sixty lines a day; and even in his last illness, of revising

one hundred lines daily. But of all literary labour that of Johnson appears the most stupendous. "In seven years," to use his own language, "he sailed a long and painful voyage round the world of the English language," and in that brief term produced his dictionary. The similar French performance occupied forty academicians nearly as many years.

During the period that Johnson was thus employed he found leisure to produce his tragedy, to complete the "Rambler," the "Vanity of Human Wishes," and several minor performances. At the latter period, he speaks of having written forty-eight octavo pages of the "Life of Savage" in one day, and a part of the night.

Such labours as these, if they do not shorten life, are calculated to make it wretched, for hypochondria invariably follows close upon them.

CHAPTER XI.

LONGEVITY OF POLEMICAL AUTHORS—PHILOLOGISTS.

In the list of polemical authors we find the longevity of those of fixed opinions on the subject of religion greater, by a hundred and five years, than that of authors of unsettled sentiments on this important inquiry after truth. The only wonder is, that the ages of the former have not furnished a still larger amount, when the different effects on health and life are taken into account, of certainty of opinion on the most important of all subjects ; of tranquillity and peace of mind on the one hand ; and on the other, of inquiries that present difficulties, doubts, or disbelief—of mental anxiety, and of the insecurity of the virtue of those whose sole dependance is on worldly honour, whose only guidance is the philosophy of men as fallible as themselves.

The list of philologists exhibits very little difference from that of the divines in the amount of the united ages of each. Though many of the former have been devoted solely to scholastic pursuits, these pursuits to a great extent are necessary to qualify the latter for their profession. But seclusion from the world, and sedentary habits, can alone enable the philologist to make his memory the store-house of the erudition of past ages, or furnish the necessary materials for that vast pyramid of classical erudition, which is based on a catacomb of ancient learning, and has its apex in a cloud that sheds no rain on the arid soil beneath it.

The more we contemplate so wonderful a structure, the greater must be our disappointment if we fail to discover its utility, and the larger the surface over which its shadows are projected, the more must be questioned the advantage of the erroneous expenditure of time and labour that was necessary for the erection of such a pile. If Cobbett should ever deign to peruse these volumes, he will pardon our metaphor for the sake of its application; but none can be more sensible of the misfortune of entitling an opinion of the inutility of any branch of learning to the approbation of that gentleman than we are; but, nevertheless, we are inclined to question the advantage of a whole life's devotion to the study of the dead languages.

What good to science, or to society, has accrued from Parr's profound knowledge of the dialects of Greece? What original works, even on the subject of his own pursuit, have issued from his pen? A few tracts and sermons, and a new edition of "Bellendenus," are his only title to the remembrance of the next age.

Languages are but the avenues to learning, and he who devotes his attention to the formation of the pebbles that lay along the road, will have little leisure for the consideration of more important objects, whose beauty or utility arrest the attention of the general observer.

We have been carried away from the subject of the effects of sedentary habits to which the pursuits that are carried on in cloisters of ancient learning are apt to lead; but in truth, there remained little to be said on the subject. If such habits appear less injurious to health in this branch of study than might have been expected, it is only because memory and not imagination, industry and not enthusiasm, have to do with the pursuits of the philologist.

CHAPTER XII.

LONGEVITY OF MUSICAL COMPOSERS, SCULPTORS, AND
PAINTERS.

Finally, we have to observe the extraordinary difference in the longevity of the musical composers, and that of the artists. We find the amount of life in the list of the sculptors and painters larger, by one hundred and twenty-eight years, than in that of the votaries of Euterpe.

Music is to sensibility what language is to poetry, the mode of expressing enthusiastic sentiments, and exciting agreeable sensations. The more imagination the composer is able to put into his music, the more powerfully he appeals to the feelings. Sensibility is the soul of music, and pathos its most powerful attribute.

Pythagoras imagined that music was the soul of life itself, or that harmony was the sum total of the faculties, and the necessary result of the concert of these faculties, and of the bodily functions.

Musical composition, then, demands extraordinary sensibility, an enthusiastic imagination, an instinctive taste, rather than deep thought. The same qualities differently directed make the poet. Is it, then, to be wondered at, that we should find the poets and the musical composers considerably shorter lived than the followers of all other learned or scientific pursuits, whose sensibility is not exercised by their studies, whose imaginations are not wearied by excessive appli-

cation and enthusiasm? The term "*genus irritabile*" deserves to be transferred from the poetical to the musical tribe; for we take it that an enraged musician is a much more common spectacle than an irritated bard, and infinitely more rabid in his choler.

Generally speaking, musicians are the most intolerant of men to one another, the most captious, the best humoured when flattered, and the worst tempered at all other times. Music, like laudanum, appears to soothe the senses when used in moderation, but the continual employment of either flurries and excites the faculties, and often renders the best natured men in the world, petulant, irritable, and violent.

In the list of artists the sculptors and painters have been placed apart for the purpose of showing the greater longevity of the former. The united ages of both exceed the poet's amount of life by no less than three hundred and thirty-two years—an ample indication of the difference of the influence of the imagination and the imitative art on health. Many, we are aware, think that imagination enters as largely into the pursuits of painting as into poetry. But, if such were the case, sculpture might indulge in the vagaries and chimeras of fancy without being obliged to have recourse to the centaurs and satyrs of poetry for its monsters, and painting might not have had to borrow its most beautiful subjects from the fervid description of Madonnas and Magdalens in the monkish records of the middle ages. It has been truly observed by an intelligent traveller, that "what the ancient poets fancied in verse, the sculptors formed in marble; what the priests invented afterwards in their cells, the painters have perpetuated on canvass. And thus the poetic fiction and the sacerdotal miracle—the ancient

fable and the modern legend, by the magic influence of the chisel and the pencil, are handed down from age to age." A vivid perception of all that is sublime and beautiful in imagination is essential to the artist ; but it does not follow because Hogarth had an excellent perception of the ridiculous, that nature had endowed him with the comic talent of a Liston. The elements of painting are said to be, invention, design, colouring, and disposition. But, if invention implies here original creative power, independent of the imagery of nature and poetry, or of events detailed in history, the term is erroneously applied. The sublimest effort of pictorial art that can be adduced in favour of the received opinion of the inventive genius of painting, is that wonderful picture of the Last Judgment, by Michael Angelo. But the majesty and glory, the terror and despair, that are depicted in it, are not invented, but embodied. The original of each outline is in the Sacred History, and our wonder is not more at the execution of such a design than at the boldness of the genius that had the courage to undertake it. Imagination is the power which the artist is least necessitated to call into action ; judgment is the master excellence which is requisite to regulate and direct the minor qualities that are given by nature, or acquired by experience. " Good sense and experience," says Burke, " acting together, find out what is fit to be done in every work of art." Painting, in a word, is the adaption of poetry to the eye, the concentration of natural imagery—the skilful combination, in a limited space, of the idea of infinity, with the perception of objects that are visible at a glance. Many of the ancient painters, it is true, were tolerable poets. Michael Angelo and Salvator Rosa were good ones ; but

it does not follow that imagination is essential to the production of art. Some of the most eminent lawyers wrote excellent verses. Sir Thomas More, Jones, Blackstone, Erskine, and Curran, had considerable talents for poetry. But poetry has very little to do with law ; neither has it with chemistry, and yet Sir Humphry Davy has left effusions of this kind behind him which would not be discreditable to any bard.

We may conclude with Goethe, "there is a difference between the art of painting and that of writing ; their bases may touch each other, but their summits, are distinct and separate." And from the list that have been noticed of the painters and poets, we have seen there is a wide difference between the influence of an imitative art and an imaginative pursuit, on health.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LAST MOMENTS OF MEN OF GENIUS.

Though to the moralist it is of much less importance how a man dies than how he lives, it is nevertheless a matter of more than curiosity to enquire how far the words and actions, the theoretical philosophy and the practical conduct of men correspond in their last moments. In such moments, what influence has mental cultivation on the conduct of individuals? Or, is there indeed any perceptible difference between the bearing of the cultivated and uncultivated mind in the last scene of all? Generally speaking, the influence of literature and science over the mind and the demeanor of men, is at no period displayed to such advantage as at that of the close of life. What medical man has attended at the death-bed of the scholar, or the studious man, and has not found death divested of half its terrors by the dignified composure of the sufferer, and his state one of peace and serenity, compared with the abject condition of the unenlightened mind in the same extremity? Those, perhaps, who relinquish life with the most reluctance, paradoxical as it may appear to be, are to be found in the most opposite grades of society—those in the very highest and lowest walks of life. In different countries, likewise, it is singular in what different degrees people are influenced by the fear of eternity, and in what different ways the pomp of death, the peculiar mode of sepulture, reasonable views of religion, and terrifying

superstitions, affect the people of particular countries. The Irish, who are certainly not deficient in physical courage, support bodily suffering, and encounter death, with less fortitude than the people of this country. A German entertains his fate, in his dying moments, more like a philosopher than a Frenchman. And, of all places in the world, the capital of Turkey is it, where we have seen death present the greatest terrors, and where life has been most unwillingly resigned. The Arabs, on the other hand, professing the same religion as the Turks, differ from them wholly in this respect, and meet death with greater indifference than the humbler classes of any other country, Mahomedan or Christian. It is truly surprising with what apathy an Arab, in extremity, will lay him down to die, and with what pertinacity the Turk will cling to life—with what abject importunity he will solicit the physician to save and preserve him.

In various epidemics in the East, we have had occasion to observe the striking difference in the conduct of both in their last moments, and especially in the expedition of Ibrahim Pasha to the Morea, when hundreds were dying daily in the camp at Suda. There the haughty Moslem went to the society of his celestial houries like a miserable slave, while the good-humoured Arab went like a hero to his long last home. The difference in their moral qualities, and the mental superiority of the Egyptian over the Turk, made all the distinction.

The result of the observation of many a closing scene in various climes, leads to the conclusion that death is envisaged by those with the least horror, whose lives have been least influenced by superstition or fanaticism,

as well as by those who have cultivated literature and science with the most ardour. "Of the great number," says Sir Henry Hallford, in his *Essay on Death*, "to whom it has been my painful professional duty to have administered in the last hours of their lives, I have sometimes felt surprised that so few have appeared reluctant to go to 'the undiscovered country, from whose bourne no traveller returns.'"

And probably, were it not for the adventitious terrors which are given to death—for all the frightful paraphernalia of the darkened chamber, the hideous vesture of the corpse, and the lugubrious visages of 'the funeral performers,' the solemn mutes who 'mimic sorrow when the heart's not sad,' and all the frightful 'pomp and circumstance' of death—the sable pall, the waving plumes;—were it not for these, and the revolting custom of heightening the horrors of sepulture, the formal mode of doing violence to the feelings of the friends who stand over the grave, death might be divested of half its terrors, and its approach even hailed as a blessing by the majority of mankind—by those, at least, who are weary of the world, whatever portion of it they may be. Is it not Johnson who has said, there is probably more pain in passing from youth to age, than from age to eternity?

Professor Hufeland, whose observations on this subject are worth all the essays that have lately obtained a temporary notoriety, and that too without any classical clap-traps or shreds and patches of ancient scholarship, has well observed in his work on longevity, "that many fear death less than the operation of dying. People (he says) form the most singular conception of the last struggle, the separation of the soul from the body, and the

like. But this is all void of foundation. No man certainly ever felt what death is ; and as insensibly as we enter into life, equally insensibly do we leave it. The beginning and the end are here united. My proofs are as follows. First, man can have no sensation of dying ; for, to die, means nothing more than to lose the vital power, and it is the vital power which is the medium of communication between the soul and body. In proportion as the vital power decreases, we lose the power of sensation and of consciousness ; and we cannot lose life without at the same time, or rather before, losing our vital sensation, which requires the assistance of the tenderest organs. We are taught also by experience, that all those who ever passed through the first stage of death, and were again brought to life, unanimously asserted that they felt nothing of dying, but sunk at once into a state of insensibility."

" Let us not be led into a mistake by the convulsive throbs, the rattling in the throat, and the apparent pangs of death, which are exhibited by many persons when in a dying state. These symptoms are painful only to the spectators, and not to the dying, who are not sensible of them. The case here is the same as if one, from the dreadful contortions of a person in an epileptic fit, should form a conclusion respecting his internal feelings : from what affects us so much, he suffers nothing."

" Let one always consider life, as it really is, a mean state, which is not an object itself, but a medium for obtaining an object, as the multifarious imperfections of it sufficiently prove ; as a period of trial and preparation, a fragment of existence, through which we are to be fitted for, and transmitted to, other periods. Can the

idea, then, of really making this transition—of ascending to another from this mean state, this doubtful problematical existence, which never affords complete satisfaction, ever excite terror? With courage and confidence we may, therefore, resign ourselves to the will of that Supreme Being, who, without our consent, placed us upon this sublunary theatre, and give up to his management the future direction of our fate.”

“Remembrance of the past, of that circle of friends who were nearest and always will be dearest to our hearts, and who, as it were, now smile to us with a friendly look of invitation from that distant country beyond the grave, will also tend very much to allay the fear of death.”

There is one point connected with this subject—the brightening up of the mind previously to its dissolution; or, to use the common expression, “the lightness before death,”—on which a few words remain to be said. The notion that dying people were favoured beyond others with a spiritualised conception of things, not only relating to time, but likewise to eternity, was familiar to the ancients, and was probably borrowed by the Jews from the Egyptians, amongst whose descendants the words and wishes of a dying man are still regarded as manifestations of a spirit of wisdom that has risen superior to the weaknesses and passions of humanity. The doctrine, however, shared the fate of all similar opinions that are specious without being solid, and entertaining without being true: it was forgotten till revived by Aretæus; and from his time to that of Sir H. Hallford, millions of people were born and buried, and no indications of a prophetic spirit exhibited by the dying, or recorded of them, till the learned baronet produced his essay on the subject. In truth, this lighting up of the mind amounts to nothing

more than a pleasurable excited condition of the mental faculties, following perhaps a state of previous torpor, and continuing a few hours, or oftentimes moments, before dissolution. This rousing up of the mind is probably produced by the stimulus of dark venous blood circulating through the arterial vessels of the brain, in consequence of the imperfect oxygenation of the blood in the lungs, whose delicate air-cells become impeded by the deposition of mucus on the surface, which there is not sufficient energy in the absorbents to remove, and hence arises the rattling in the throat which commonly precedes death.*

The effect of this new stimulus of dark-coloured blood in the arterial vessels, appears strongly to resemble the exhilarating effects of the opium, inasmuch as physical pain is lulled, the sensations soothed, and the imagination exalted. Long-forgotten pleasures are recalled, old familiar faces are seen in the mind's eye, and well-remembered friends are communed with, and the imaginative power of giving a real presence to the shadowy reproductions of memory is busily employed, and a sort of delirium, or rather of mental exaltation, is the consequence, in which a rapid succession of ideas, in most instances apparently of an agreeable nature, pass through the mind, and the sense of bodily pain to all appearance is wholly overpowered. These phenomena were, perhaps, never more strikingly exhibited than in the case of the late Mr. Salt. The last three or four days of his life his mind seemed to have regained all its former activity. He spoke in various languages to his attendants, some of

* In the Quarterly Review for April, the explanation of the phenomena here glanced at is sensibly and intelligibly given, and may be referred to with advantage for larger information on this subject.

which, as the Amharic, he had not used for many years; he composed some verses that referred to his previous sufferings, and repeated them with great energy to the friend who accompanied him. The prophetic spirit which in some degree is supposed, by the authors we have alluded to, to be attained by the dying, was likewise aimed at, though not attained in this instance—for poor Salt frequently predicted that he would die on a Thursday, but the prediction was not accomplished.

Some of the following brief accounts of the closing scene of men of genius, may tend to illustrate the preceding observations, and to show how far a predominant passion or favourite pursuit may influence the mind even at the latest hour of life. In nearly every instance, "the ruling passion strong in death" is found to be displayed.

Rousseau, when dying, ordered his attendants to place him before the window, that he might once more behold his garden, and bid adieu to nature.

Addison's dying speech to his son-in-law was characteristic enough of the man, who was accustomed to inveigh against the follies of mankind, though not altogether free from some of the frailties he denounced. "Behold," said he to the dissolute young nobleman, "with what tranquillity a Christian can die!"

Roscommon uttered at the moment he expired, two lines of his own version of "*Dies iræ*."

Haller died feeling his pulse, and when he found it almost gone, turning to his brother physician, said, "My friend, the artery ceases to beat," and died.

Petrarch was found dead in his library, leaning on a book.

Bead died in the act of dictating.

Herder closed his career writing an ode to the Deity, his pen on the last line.

Waller died repeating some lines of Virgil.

Metastasio, who would never suffer the word death to be uttered in his presence, at last so far triumphed over his fears, that, after receiving the last rites of religion, in his enthusiasm he burst forth into a stanza of religious poetry.

Lucan died reciting some verses of his own *Pharsalia*.

Alfieri, the day before he died, was persuaded to see a priest; and when he came, he said to him with great affability, "Have the kindness to look in to-morrow—I trust death will wait four-and-twenty hours."

Napoleon, when dying, and in the act of speaking to the clergyman, reproved his sceptical physician for smiling, in these words—"You are above those weaknesses, but what can I do? I am neither a philosopher nor a physician; I believe in God, and am of the religion of my father. It is not every one who can be an atheist." The last words he uttered—Head—Army—evinced clearly enough what sort of visions were passing over his mind at the moment of dissolution.

Tasso's dying request to Cardinal Cynthia was indicative of the gloom which haunted him through life; he had but one favour, he said, to request of him, which was, that he would collect his works, and commit them to the flames, especially his *Jerusalem Delivered*.

Leibnitz was found dead in his chamber, with a book in his hand.

Clarendon's pen dropped from his fingers when he was seized with the palsy, which terminated his life.

Chaucer died ballad making. His last production he entitled, "A Ballad, made by Geoffrey Chaucer on his death-bed, lying in great anguish."

Barthelemy was seized with death while reading his favourite Horace.

Sir Godfrey Kneller's vanity was displayed in his last moments. Pope, who visited him two days before he died, says, he never saw a scene of so much vanity in his life; he was sitting up in his bed, contemplating the plan he was making for his own monument.

Wycherly, when dying, had his young wife brought to his bed-side, and having taken her hand in a very solemn manner, said, he had but one request to make of her, and that was, that she would never marry an old man again. There is every reason to believe, though it is not stated in the account, that so reasonable a request could not be denied at such a moment.

"Bolingbroke," says Spence, "in his last illness, desired to be brought to the table where we were sitting at dinner; his appearance was such that we all thought him dying, and Mrs. Arbuthnot involuntarily exclaimed, 'This is quite an Egyptian feast.' " On another authority he is represented as being overcome by terrors and excessive passion in his last moments, and, after one of his fits of choler, being overheard by Sir Harry Mildmay complaining to himself, and saying, "What will my poor soul undergo for all these things?"

Keats, a little before he died, when his friend asked him how he did, replied in a low voice, "Better, my friend. I feel the daisies growing over me."

In D'Israeli's admirable work on "Men of Genius," from which some of the preceding accounts are taken, many others are to be found, tending to illustrate more forcibly, perhaps, than any of those instances we have given, the soothing, and if the word may be allowed, the benign influence of literary habits on the tranquillity of the individual in his latest moments.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE IMPROVIDENCE OF LITERARY MEN.

If the misfortunes of men of genius were unconnected with their infirmities, any notice of them, however brief, would be irrelevant to the subject of these pages. In literature itself, there surely is nothing to favour improvidence, or to unfit men for the active duties of life; but in the habits which literary men contract from excessive application to their pursuits, there is a great deal to disqualify the studious man for those petty details of economy and prudence, which are essential to the attainment of worldly prosperity. "It is incongruous," says Burns, " 'tis absurd to suppose that the man, whose mind glows with sentiments lighted up at the sacred flame of poetry—a man whose heart distends with benevolence to all the human race, who soars above this little scene of things, can condescend to mind the paltry concerns about which the terræ-filial race fret, and fume, and vex themselves." Poor Burns had evidently his own improvidence in view when he made this observation, but he must have been the most simple-minded of bards if he expected to disarm the censure of the world by it. Its charity may sometimes extend to the eccentricities of genius, but seldom to the poverty that springs from its improvidence. The greatest explosion of periodical morality that we remember to have occurred for some years, took place in most of the newspapers of the day, not many months ago, on the occasion of the appearance of the life of a celebrated

bard, in which the biographer had unfortunately spoken of the poetic temperament as one ill-calculated to favour the cultivation of the social and domestic ties. Many men of genius have unquestionably been every thing that men should be in all the relations of private life; therefore, with those outrageous moralists, there was no reason why all men of genius should not be patterns of excellence to all good citizens, husbands, fathers, and economical managers of private affairs. No reason can be given why they should not be such. We only know, that such the majority of them unfortunately are not; and, indeed, in the varied distribution of nature's gifts, when we generally find the absence of one excellence atoned for by the possession of another, it would be in vain to expect a combination of all such advantages in the same individual. Nature cannot afford to be so profusely lavish even to her favourites. It is somewhat singular, that those instances of pre-eminent genius, accompanied by well-regulated conduct and domestic virtues, which are adduced in opposition to the notion that the temperament of genius exerts an unfavourable influence on the habits of private life, are of persons who never took upon them the ties of husbands or of fathers. And had they done so, who knows what their conduct might have been in these relations? Newton, Galileo, Michael Angelo, Locke, Hume, Pope, never married; neither did Bacon, Voltaire, and many other illustrious men, who either distrusted their own fitness for the married state, or were afraid to stake their tranquillity on the hazard of the matrimonial die.

Whatever doubt there may be, whether the man who lives *sibi et musis* in his study, and not in society, who communes with former ages, and not with the events

which are passing around him, is eminently qualified for the duties and offices of married life, it cannot be denied that his habits, and the tendency of his pursuits, are ill-calculated to make him a provident or a thrifty man.

In all ages and in all countries, poverty has been the patrimony of the muses. Johnson, Goldsmith, Fielding, and Butler, commenced their literary career in garrets, from which, no doubt, they had as unimpeded a prospect of the workhouse as the summits of Parnassus are said to afford. Even Addison wrote his Campaign in a garret in the Haymarket. Camoens died in an alms-house, and fifteen years afterwards had a splendid monument erected to his memory. It was with the poor man of genius in that day as the present: "And they who loathed his life, might gild his grave." Chatterton lies buried in Shoe-lane workhouse, and Otway expired in a pott-house. The Adventurer goes so far as to state, that not a favourite of the Muses, since the days of Amphion, was ever able to build a house. Poor Scott, however, did more than build one, and the example is certainly not encouraging to authors.

But perhaps there is not another instance, even in this land of wealth, of an author by profession dwelling in a habitation of his own erection.

Burton ascribes the heedlessness of literary men, of their own affairs, and consequently their poverty, to the unhappy influence of the Muses' destiny. "When Jupiter's daughters," he says, "were all married to the gods, the Muses alone were left solitary, probably because they had no portions. Helicon was forsaken of all suitors, and Calliope only continued to be a maid, because she had no dower." Petronius, he narrates, knew a scholar by the meanness of his apparel. "There came," saith he,

"by chance into my company, a fellow not very spruce to look on, whom I could perceive, by that note alone, to be a scholar, whom commonly all rich men hate. I asked him what he was? and he answered—a poet. I demanded, why he was ragged? he told me this kind of learning never made any man rich."

"All which our ordinary students," says Burton, "right well perceiving in the Universities, how unprofitable are these poetical and philosophical pursuits of theirs, apply themselves, in all haste, to more commodious and lucrative professions. They are no longer heedful of knowledge—he who can tell his money, hath arithmetic enough: he is a true geometrician, who can measure a good fortune to himself: a perfect astrologer, who can cast the rise and fall of others, and turn their errant motions to his own advantage: the best optician, who can reflect the beams of a great man's favour, and cause them to shine upon himself."

Æneas Sylvius says he knew many scholars in his time "excellent, well-learned men, but so rude, so silly, that they had no common civility, nor knew how to manage either their own affairs, or those of the public."

"They are generally looked down upon," continues Burton, "on account of their carriage, because they cannot ride a horse, which every clown can manage; salute and court a gentlewoman; carve properly at table; cringe and make congees, which every common swasher can do." They cannot truly vaunt much of their accomplishments in this way; they belong to that race, of one of whom Pliny gave the description—"He is yet a scholar; than which kind of men there is nothing so simple, so sincere, and none better."

But the miseries of Grub-street are no longer known:

well-fed authors may be daily encountered in "the Row," and no writer of any repute perambulates the town, at least within a rood of Bond-street, in a thread-bare coat. In short, there is a general opinion that literature has of late become a lucrative employment; that God has mollified the hearts of booksellers—"hearts," which in by-gone times had "become like that of Leviathan, firm as a stone, yea hard as a piece of nether mill-stone."

It is commonly imagined, that because it has become the fashion for people of rank to write books, there are no poor authors, no "patient merit" unrewarded in the metropolis—no unfortunate men of genius condemned to bear "the whips and scorns of the time," to hawk about their intellectual wares from publisher to publisher, till they are tempted, like poor Collins, to consign them to the flames; to dance attendance on some bashaw of "the trade," who rubs his soft hands, while he is sifting, not the merit of the performance, but the politics and connections of the author; and when he has duly ascertained that he is dealing with a man of the principles which every author who is a gentleman is supposed to profess, he then may be open to an offer for the work, and perhaps in as many weeks as days have been promised,—(and if the author is a very poor and modest man,) in as many months—the manuscript may be examined, and in all probability very civilly declined by one whose promises may have proved the bitter bread of disappointment, and who never may have known what it is to feel that sickness of the heart which arises from hope deferred. Or perhaps the poor author may try his fate elsewhere, and his heart may die away within him, while he is kept waiting in an ante-room for the customary period of solitary confinement, that is sufficient to subdue the

ardent expectations of an author, before he is admitted to the presence of "the great invisible." But when at length his form is revealed to the author's eye, emerging from a pile of fashionable publications, to be frozen to death by inches by the cold civility of his smile, to be asked in "bated breath and bondsman key," for the nature of the influence that is to push the book, and in default of an aristocratic name, and a fashionable acquaintance, to be bowed like a mandarin to the outer door, is what he has to expect, and to be assured all the time that the work is a very good work in its way, but that authors who would be read, must have titles as well as their books, and that nothing short of a baronetcy will go down in a title-page.

If it be imagined there are no authors now-a-days, pining as in former times, in want and wretchedness, because their destitution is not so much obtruded on the public as it formerly was wont to be, little is the condition of a vast portion of the literary men of London known. Because shame may not allow them to parade their poverty before the eyes of their fellow-men in Regent street or Hyde Park, because their seedy garments and attenuated forms are not to be seen in public places, forsooth they exist not!—alas! they are to be found elsewhere, and their familiar companions are still but too frequently

*Pallentes morbi, luctus, curæque laborque
Et metus, et malesuada fames, et turpis egestas
Terribiles visu formæ.——*

But it would be absurd, as well as unjust, to attribute the misfortunes of literary men to the conduct of those whose business it is to cater for the literary taste

of the public. If authors have to complain, it is of the system on which the book trade is carried on, and not of the individuals who are employed in it: generally speaking, it must be acknowledged, men more liberal and more honourable are not to be met with.

It cannot be denied that literary men are too often desirous to cover their own imprudence by taxing the world with neglecting merit, by railing at fortune for the blind distribution of her gifts. "Many of the English poets," says Goethe, "after spending their early years in folly and licentiousness, have afterwards thought themselves entitled to deplore the vanities of human life. It is unreasonable of those who have wholly devoted themselves to the acquisition of fame, and not of fortune, to expect the advantages that are solely in the latter's gift. Porson, in his embarrassment, thought it a hard case, that with all his Greek, he could not command a hundred pounds; and Burns, in his letters, whines about his poverty, as if he had expected, by the cultivation of poetry, to have amassed a fortune.

The most sensible observations we have ever seen on this subject are those of a lady, whose reputation deservedly ranks high in the literary world, and such is their merit, that we may be permitted to end this subject with their insertion.

"The poet complains of his poverty when he sees a rich booby wallowing in wealth, forgetting such wealth is acquired or retained by such paltry arts as he disdains to practise; if he refuse to pay the price, why expect the purchase? We should consider this world as a great mart of commerce, where wealth, ease, fame, and knowledge, are exposed to our view. Our industry and labour are so much ready money, which we are to lay out to the

best advantage. Examine, choose, or reject the wares, but stand to your own judgment, and do not like children, when you have purchased one thing, repine that you do not possess another, which you did not purchase. If you would be rich, you must put your heart against the Muses, and be content to feed your understanding with plain and household truths. You must keep on in one beaten track, without turning to the right hand or the left. 'But I cannot submit to drudgery like this—I feel a spirit above it.' 'Tis well to be above it then, only do not repine that you are not rich.

"Is knowledge the pearl of price? you see that too may be purchased by steady application, and long solitary hours of study and reflection. 'But,' says the man of letters, 'is it not a hardship that many an illiterate fellow, who cannot construe the motto on his coach, shall raise a fortune, and make a figure, while I have little more than the common necessities of life?'"

"Was it in order to raise a fortune you consumed the sprightly hours of youth in study and retirement? Was it to be rich that you grew pale over the midnight lamp? You have then mistaken your path, and ill employed your industry. 'What reward have I then for all my labours?' What reward!—A large comprehensive soul, well purged from vulgar fears, and perturbations, and prejudices, able to interpret the works of man and God. A rich, flourishing, cultivated mind, pregnant with inexhaustible stores of entertainment and reflection. A perpetual spring of fresh ideas, and the conscious dignity of superior intelligence. Good heavens! and what reward can you ask beside?"

"If a mean dirty fellow should have amassed wealth enough to buy half a nation, is it a reproach upon the eco-

mony of Providence? Not in the least. He made himself a mean dirty fellow for that very end. He has paid his health, his conscience, his liberty for it, and will you envy him his bargain? Will you hang your head and blush in his presence, because he outshines you in show and equipage? Lift your head with a noble confidence, and say to yourself, 'I have not these things, it is true; but it is because I have not sought them; it is because I possess something better. I have chosen my lot; I am content and satisfied.' "

CHAPTER XV.

APPLICATION OF THE PRECEDING OBSERVATIONS.

The history of men of genius affords abundant proof that the habits of literary men are unfavourable to health, and that constant application to those studies, whose acknowledged tendency is to exalt the intellect, and to enlarge the faculties of the mind, are nevertheless productive of consequences similar to those which arise from physical infirmities. "The conversation of a poet," says Goldsmith, "is that of a man of sense, while his actions are those of a fool."

There is no reason why folly should emanate from poetry ; but we have reason enough to know that many mental infirmities arise from sedentary habits and their accompanying evils ; yet in the face of modern biography, it requires a little courage to assert that bodily disease has an influence over the feelings, temper, or sensibility of studious men, and that it gives a colour to character, which it is often impossible to discriminate by any other light than that of medical philosophy. In the following pages we purpose to illustrate this opinion, by referring to the lives of a few of those individuals, the splendour of whose career has brought, not only their frailties, but their peculiarities into public notice, and by pointing out, in each instance, those deviations from health which deserve to be taken into account in fairly considering the literary character.

The most frequent disorders of literary men are dys-

pepsia and hypochondria, and in extreme cases, the termination of these maladies is in some cerebral disorder, either mania, epilepsy, or paralysis, and these we intend to notice in the order of their succession in the following brief sketches of the physical infirmities of Pope, Johnson, Burns, Cowper, Byron, and, lastly, Scott, in whose case the absence of the ordinary errors of genius, may be ascribed in a great measure to well-regulated habits, which certainly were not those of the others above mentioned.

POPE.

For about three quarters of a century the public laboured under the delusion that Pope was a poet, and moreover a man of tolerable morals, till an amiable clergyman, instigated no doubt by the most laudable motives, took upon himself to disabuse the world of its error, and to pull down the reputation of Homer's translator from the eminence it had undeservedly attained. It was an adventurous task, and one which required a mind fraught with all the fervour of literary controversy, and actuated solely by an honest detestation of false pretensions and flagrant imposition. He had to invalidate the title of an impostor to literary immortality; he had to impugn the character of a man who is supposed to have had some virtues, and whose failings had unfortunately been almost forgotten; and verily, the task was performed with signal intrepidity, though not perhaps with complete success. A troublesome opponent took the field in defence of a brother bard's disparaged fame, and he laid about him like one who was accustomed to

spare no critic in his rage, and no reviewer in his anger. The distinction of being attacked by such an adversary was the only advantage to be gained by the contest; but this advantage was purchased at the expense of considerable punishment. The controversy was a hot one, and the fame of the individual who was the subject of the quarrel had to pass through an ordeal of fire; but phoenix-like, the character of the poet rose triumphant from the flames, albeit the conduct of the man came forth, not altogether unscathed by the conflagration. Not even Byron's genius could rescue the memory of Pope from the obloquy of the long forgotten errors that had been raked up by the indefatigable industry of his opponent; for in attempting to palliate those errors, the bodily infirmities of the victim of the controversy were overlooked, and no satisfactory explanation was given of that peevishness of temper, and waywardness of humour, which unquestionably tarnished the character of this favourite—we had almost said, this spoiled child of genius.

The following references to his habits and temperament may probably throw some little light on the nature of his failings, and tend even to remove the impression which the animadversions of Mr. Bowles may have produced. "By natural deformity, or accidental distortion," we are told by Johnson, "the vital functions of Pope were so much disordered, that his life was a long disease." The deformity alluded to arose from an affection of the spine, contracted in infancy, and to which the extreme delicacy of his constitution is to be attributed.

When it is recollected that the nerves which supply the abdominal viscera with the energy that is essential to their functions, are derived from the spinal column, the cause of the disorder of his digestive powers during the

whole of his life is easily conceived. As he advanced in life the original complaint ceased to make any further progress, and its effects on his constitution might have been removed by due attention to regimen and exercise; but instead of these, active medicines and stimulating diet were the means he constantly employed of temporarily palliating the exhaustion, and obviating the excitement consequent on excessive mental application. None of his biographers, indeed, allude to his having suffered from indigestion; and it is even possible that he might not have been himself aware of the nature of those anomalous symptoms of dyspepsia, which mimic the form of every other malady; those symptoms of giddiness, languor, dejection, palpitation of the heart, constant headache, dimness of sight, occasional failure of the mental powers, exhaustion of nervous energy, depriving the body of vital heat, and the diminution of muscular strength, without a corresponding loss of flesh, he frequently complains of; and every medical man is aware, that they are the characteristic symptoms of dyspepsia.

One patient calls his disorder spleen, another nervousness, another melancholy, another irritability: the medical nomenclature is no less prolific, but all their titles are for a single malady, and "not one of them," says Dr. James Johnson, in his admirable treatise on the "Morbid Sensibility of the Stomach," "expresses the real nature of the malady, but only some of its multiform symptoms. Of all these designations, indigestion has been the most hacknied title, and it is, in my opinion, the most erroneous. The very worst forms of the disease—forms in which the body is tortured for years, and the mind ultimately wrecked, often exhibit no sign or proof of indi-

gestion, in the ordinary sense of the word, the appetite being good, the digestion apparently complete."

The fact is, that where pain is not the character of the disease, the attention of the patient is carried to the symptoms in organs, perhaps the remotest from the cause; and in this particular disorder the patient is seldom or ever sensible of pain in the actual seat of it.

We are told by Pope's biographer, "that the indulgence and accommodation that his sickness required, had taught him all the unpleasing and unsocial qualities of a valetudinarian man." And in various other passages we are informed that he was irascible, capricious, peevish, and resentful; often wanton in his attacks, and unjust in his censures; that he delighted in artifice in his intercourse with mankind, so that he could hardly drink tea without a stratagem; that his cunning sometimes descended to such petty parsimony as writing his composition on the backs of letters, by which perhaps he might have saved five shillings in five years, (a crime against stationary, by the way, which he shared in common with Sir Walter Scott,) that although he occasionally gave a splendid dinner, and was enabled to do so on an income of about eight hundred a year, his entertainment was often scanty to his friends, and he was capable of setting a single pint upon the table, and saying to his guests when he retired, "Gentlemen, I leave you to your wine." We are told, moreover, that his satire had often in it more of petulance, personality, and malignity, than of moral design, or a desire to refine the public taste.

These are serious charges against the justice and amiability of his character; and probably there is a great deal of truth in them, but they only apply to his character, not to his disposition.

There is a paradox in the conduct of literary men, which makes it necessary to draw a distinction between their actions, and their sentiments, between the author with a pen in his hand, and the man without it; between the character that is formed by the world, and the disposition which is only known by private friends.

Johnson has pictured Pope as he really appeared to the world; but Bolingbroke spoke of him when he was on his death-bed, not as he appeared to be, but as he knew him to have been, when he said to his weeping attendants,—“I have known him these thirty years; he was the kindest hearted man in the world.” Who knows under what paroxysm of mental irritation of that disease which, more than any other, domineers over the feelings of the sufferer, he might have written those bitter sarcasms which he levelled against his literary opponents? Who knows in what moment of bodily pain his irascibility might have taken the form of unjustifiable satire, or his morbid sensibility assumed the sickly shape of petulance and peevishness? Who knows how the strength of the strong mind might have been cast down by his sufferings, when “he descended to the artifice” of imposing on a bookseller, and of “writing those letters for effect which he published by subterfuge?” Who, that has observed how the vacillating conduct of the dyspeptic invalid imitates the vagaries of this proteiform malady, can wonder at his capriciousness, or be surprised at the anomaly of bitterness on the tongue, and benevolence in the heart, of the same individual?

But Pope’s biting sarcasm was only aimed at his enemies. Byron little cared whether friend or foe was the victim of his spleen; those he best loved in the world were those who suffered most from the bitterness of his

distempered feelings. To read those injurious lines on "Rogers," that have lately appeared, and which never ought to have been dragged into public notice, is to fancy the malignity of Byron greater even than Milton's, which (we are falsely told) was sufficient to make hell grow darker at its scowl.

But whose, in this instance, was the greater malignity of the two—the writer of productions, penned, in all probability, under the excitement of mental irritability and bodily infirmity, without a moment's forethought, or an aim, or an object, beyond the miserable gratification of seeing on paper the severest thing he could say of his best friend: an exercise of melancholy, to try how far poetic ingenuity could exaggerate the foibles of those he knew to be exempt from grave defects—written without premeditation, and never intended for publicity;—or the deep deliberate malignity of the literary jackal, that panders to the rage of the noble-hearted lion, and then prowls about his lair, and steals away, when the creature sleeps, the provender of the mangled *disjectæ membri humanitatis*, for the "*omni vorantia et homicida gula*" of the savage community of his own species?

Who might not wish that "a whip were placed in every honest hand," to punish the offender, who, reckless of the feelings of the living, and regardless of the fame and honour of the dead, dragged those effusions into light which were born in the obscurity of the study, and never meant to be sent beyond its precincts? No malignity is comparable to his, for whom there is no sanctity in the grave, in friendship no respect, and no restraint on the pen that perpetuates a slander that had otherwise been forgotten.

But what have the failings of Lord Byron, or the

perfidy of his friends, to do with our subject?—little more, indeed, than to break up the monotony of the task of recording the infirmities of his brother bard. That these had their origin in his dyspeptic malady, we have little doubt.

“From numerous facts,” says Dr. James Johnson, which have come within my own observation, I am convinced that many strange antipathies, disgusts, caprices of temper, and eccentricities, which are considered solely as obliquities of the intellect, have their source in corporeal disorder.

“The great majority of those complaints which are considered as purely mental, such as irascibility, melancholy, timidity, and irresolution, might be greatly remedied, if not entirely removed by a proper system of temperance, and with very little medicine. There is no accounting for the magic-like spell, which annihilates for a time the whole energy of the mind, and renders the victim of dyspepsia afraid of his own shadow, or of things, if possible more unsubstantial than shadows.

“It is not likely that the great men of the earth should be exempt from these visitations any more than the little: and if so, we may reasonably conclude that there are other things besides ‘conscience’ which ‘make cowards of us all;’ and that by a temporary gastric irritation many an ‘enterprise of vast pith and moment’ has had ‘its current turned awry,’ and ‘lost the name of action.’

“The philosopher and the metaphysician, who know but little of these reciprocities of mind and matter, have drawn many a false conclusion from, and erected many a baseless hypothesis on, the actions of men. Many a happy thought has sprung from an empty stomach; many

a terrible and merciless edict has gone forth in consequence of an irritated gastric nerve.

"Thus health," continues the author we have just quoted, "may make the same man a hero in the field, whom dyspepsia may render imbecile in the cabinet."

It was under the influence of this malady that Pope's better judgment was occasionally warped, and that his feelings, for the time, swayed to and fro with his infirmities. On no other supposition can the anomalies in his character be reconciled. Both of his early biographers admit that his writings, especially his letters, were at variance with his conduct; they exhibit, we are told by Johnson, a distaste of life, a contempt of death, a perpetual and unclouded effulgence of general benevolence and particular affection; "but it is easy," he adds, "to despise death, when there is no danger, and to glow with benevolence when there is nothing to be given."

But surely it is not so very heinous an offence against the epistolary statute of sincerity, to "assume a virtue," even "when we have it not;" and Johnson, himself, even questioned the truth of the common opinion, that "he who writes to his friend, lays his bosom open before him. Very few," he says, "can boast of hearts which they dare lay open to themselves; and, certainly, what we hide from ourselves we do not show to our friends. In the eagerness of conversation the first emotions of the mind often burst out before they are considered, but a friendly letter is a calm, deliberate performance, in the cool of leisure, in the stillness of solitude; and surely no man sits down to depreciate, by design, his own character. By whom can a man wish to be thought so much better than he is, than by him whose kindness he desires

to gain or keep? Even in writing to the world there is less restraint."

But though his letters are filled with those ordinary topics of literary correspondence, a sense of the worthlessness of his own productions, a spirit of invulnerability against the shafts of censure, nevertheless though censure is the tax, according to Swift, which a man pays to the public for being eminent, no one paid that tax with a worse grace than Pope. "There are but three ways," (he remarks elsewhere,) "for a man to revenge himself of the censure of the world; to despise it, to return the like, or to endeavour to live so as to avoid it. The first of these is usually pretended, the last is almost impossible—the universal practice is for the second." Pope, forsooth, did practise the second with a vengeance, but to use the expression Johnson applied to another of the *genus irritabile*, he still was "a sapling on the summit of Parnassus, blown about by every wind of criticism."

How severely he suffered from his malady may be inferred from the account Johnson has given of his habits and condition about the middle of his life. "His constitution," he says, "which was originally feeble, became now so debilitated that he stood in perpetual need of female attendance; and so great was his sensibility of cold, that he wore a kind of fur doublet under a shirt of very coarse warm linen. When he rose he was invested in a bodice made of stiff canvass, being scarcely able to hold himself erect till it was laced, and he then put on a flannel waistcoat. His legs were so slender, that he enlarged their bulk with three pairs of stockings, which were drawn on and off by the maid; for he was not able to dress or undress himself, and he neither went to bed nor rose without help." This extraordinary necessity

for artificial warmth was an evident indication of the deficiency of nervous energy ; and what could be expected from the prostration of mental and bodily power, the inevitable consequence of such a miserable condition of the system, but irritability of temper, peevishness, and petulance ? " It is said," says Dr. James Johnson, " and I believe with justice, that an infant never cries without feeling some pain.

" The same observation might be extended to maturer years, and it might be safely asserted that the temper is never unusually irritable without some moral or physical cause—and much more frequently a physical cause than is suspected. A man's temper may undoubtedly be soured by a train of moral circumstances, but I believe that it is much more frequently rendered irritable by the effects of those moral causes on his corporeal organs and functions. The moral cause makes its first impression on the brain, the organ of the mind. The organs of digestion are those disturbed sympathetically and re-act on the brain : and thus the reciprocal action and re-action of the two systems of organs on each other produce a host of effects, moral as well as physical, by which the temper is broken, and the health impaired."

Head-ache was the urgent symptom which Pope constantly complained of, and this he was in the habit of relieving by inhaling the steam of coffee. It is difficult to conceive on what principle this remedy could alleviate his sufferings ; but from the manner in which he aggravated them by improper diet, it is very probable that his remedy was no better than his regimen. It appears that, like all dyspeptic men, he was fond of every thing that was not fit for him. " He was too indulgent to his appetite," says his biographer ; " he loved meat highly sea-

soned, and if he sat down to a variety of dishes, he would oppress his stomach by repletion; and though he seemed to be angry when a dram was offered him, he did not forbear to drink it: his friends, who knew the avenues to his heart, pampered him with presents of luxury which he did not suffer to stand neglected. We are told by Dr. King, his contemporary and friend, that his frame of body promised any thing but long health, but that he certainly hastened his death by feeding much on high seasoned dishes, and drinking spirits."

From the various accounts given of his mode of living, and of the sufferings it entailed on him, it was evident that his appetite was depraved by indigestion; and it is no less obvious, that constitutional debility induced by that deformity, either natural or accidental, under which he laboured from his cradle, had given the predisposition to this disorder. His frequent head-aches, and the sensation of confusion and giddiness after application to study, or excess in diet, those premonitory symptoms of dyspepsia, he appears to have looked upon as his original disease, whereas the stomach was the seat of his disorder, and the affection of the head only sympathetic with it. Yet it must be admitted, that when literary men are the subjects of this disorder, that it is very often exceedingly difficult to determine whether the head or the stomach is primarily affected; but in whichever of them is its origin, so immediate is the influence of the one on the other, that the treatment is not materially embarrassed by our uncertainty of the primary seat of the disease. It is the nature of parts sympathetically affected to become disordered in their functions, rather than organically diseased: at least it is a considerable period before any alteration of structure in a symptomatic disorder takes place. The

interval between the two results is occupied by a long train of anomalous ills, which are generally denominated nervous. The term is vague and unmeaning enough for all the purposes of nosology. It implies a host of sufferings which sap the strength and sink the spirits of the invalid, and this hydra-headed malady may continue for years an inculus on his happiness, which utterly destroys not health, but renders valetudinarianism a sort of middle state of existence between indisposition and disease. The symptomatic affection of the head only becomes an organic disease, when the long-continued cause has given it such power that the effect acquires the force of a first cause in its influence on an organ previously weakened or predisposed to disease. It is then easily conceived how the simple head-ache, in the case of Pope, continued for years symptomatic of a disorder of the stomach, aggravated by mental excitement and improper diet; till the disturbance of the functions of the brain ultimately debilitated that organ, and left it no longer able to resist the effects of the constant exercise of the mental faculties. The result of such long-continued disturbance of the cerebral functions, there is generally great reason to apprehend, will be either alteration in the structure, softening of its substance, or effusion serous or sanguineous.

There is great reason to believe that one of these terminations took place in the case of Pope several years before his death, as it was found to have done in the case of Swift, and more recently in that of Scott. Even when Pope was apparently in the enjoyment of tolerable health, he had evident symptoms of pressure on the brain, or at least of an unequal and imperfect distribution of the blood in that organ. Those symptoms are only noticed by his contemporaries as curious phenomena

connected with his habits of life. Spence says he frequently complained of seeing every thing in the room as through a curtain, and on another occasion of seeing false colours on certain objects. At another time, on a sick bed, he asked Dodsley what arm it was that had the appearance of coming out from the wall ; and at another period he told Spence, if he had any vanity, he had enough to mortify it a few days before, for he had lost his mind for a whole day. Well might Bolingbroke say, "the greatest hero is nothing under a certain state of the nerves ; his mind becomes like a fine ring of bells, jangled and out of tune !"

The debility of his constitution in his latter years rendered his existence burthensome to himself and others ; his irritability increased with his infirmities, and the peevishness of disease was aggravated by the unkindness and unfeeling conduct of the woman who had been his companion and attendant for many years. The frequent expression of his weariness of life hardly deserves the suspicion of affectation which Johnson entertained of its sincerity. Surely there must have been no little inherent melancholy in the temperament of a man who, in Johnson's own words, "by no merriment either of others or his own, was ever seen excited to laughter."

For five years previous to his decease he had been afflicted with asthma ; his constitution was completely shattered, and at length dropsy, the common attendant on long sufferings and extreme debility, made its appearance. He was for some time delirious, but a day or two before his death he became collected. He was asked whether a Catholic priest should not be called to him ; he replied, "I do not think it is essential, but it will be very right, and I thank you for putting me in

mind of it." The calm self-possession, the dignity, and the decorum of his reply, well became the last moments of a Christian philosopher ; the forms of his religion had no hold of his affections, but that was no reason why its duties should be neglected, or why the feelings of those who believed in the efficacy of its forms should be outraged. Death at length happily terminated the sufferings of a life which was a long disease, for such was the career of Pope, from his cradle to the tomb, in which he was deposited in his fifty-sixth year.

Whatever were his infirmities, however great their influence on his temper or his conduct, it appears that neither his irascibility, nor his capriciousness, had ever estranged a real friend. His biographer, who has spared none of his failings, has admitted this fact. The cause of his defects was too obvious to those who were familiar with him, to be overlooked ; they knew that ill-health had an unfavourable influence on his character, and that knowledge was sufficient to shield his errors from inconsiderate censure, and uncharitable severity.

CHAPTER XVI.

JOHNSON.

"There are many invisible circumstances," says the author of the Rambler, "which, whether we read as enquirers after natural or moral knowledge, whether we intend to enlarge our science, or increase our virtue, are more important than public occurrences. All the plans and enterprises of De Witt are now of less importance to the world, than that part of his personal character which represents him as careful of his health, and negligent of his life."

There are three peculiarities in Johnson's character which every one is aware of, his irascibility, his superstition, and his fear of death; but there are very many acquainted with these singular inconsistencies of so great a mind, who are ignorant, or at least unobservant, of that malady under which he laboured, from manhood to the close of life, the symptoms of which disease are invariably those very moral infirmities of temper and judgment, which were his well known defects. Few, indeed, are ignorant that he was subject to great depression of spirits, amounting almost to despair, but generally speaking, the precise nature of his disorder, and the extent of its influence over the mental faculties, are very little considered.

There are a train of symptoms belonging to a particular disease described by Cullen, and amongst them it is worth while to consider whether the anomalies that have

been alluded to in the character of Johnson are to be discovered. The following are Cullen's terms :

"A disposition to seriousness, sadness, and timidity as to all future events, an apprehension of the worst and most unhappy state of them, and, therefore, often on slight grounds, an apprehension of great evil. Such persons are particularly attentive to the state of their own health, to every the smallest change of feeling in their bodies ; and from any unusual sensation, perhaps of the slightest kind, they apprehend great danger and even death itself. In respect to these feelings and fears, there is commonly the most obstinate belief and persuasion." It is needless to say, the disease that is spoken of is hypochondria. Whether Johnson was its victim, or whether the defects in his character were original imperfections and infirmities, natural to his disposition, remains to be shown in the following pages.

We have a few words to say of the nature of hypochondria, which need not alarm the general reader ; so little is known of any thing relative to it besides its symptoms, that very little can be said upon the subject. In the first place it may be as well to acknowledge that the seat of the disorder is unknown. Secondly, be the seat where it may, the nature of the morbid action that is going on, we likewise know not : and, thirdly, that it is a disorder little under the influence of medicine, almost all medical authors do admit. These admissions, we apprehend, bring the question to very narrow limits ; to limits which trench on the boundaries of every literary man's estate : for, indeed, the most important points left for consideration are whether men of studious habits are more subject than other men to this disorder ; and if more so, whether the moral infirmities of the hypochon-

driac are entitled to more indulgence than those of an individual who labours under no such depressing ailment.

In proof of the first assertion, we have only to say, that Hippocrates places the seat of the disorder in the liver; Boerhaave in the spleen; Hoffman in the stomach; Sydenham in the animal spirits; Broussais in the intestines; and Willis in the brain. In corroboration of the second, we have but to adduce Sydenham, describing it as a disease of debility; Dr. Wilson Phillip, as one of chronic inflammation; and Dr. James Johnson, (and, perhaps, with the most reason,) as one of morbid sensibility: but, like taste, there is no accounting for theories.

For the truth of our last proposition we appeal to general experience, for the confirmation of the opinion, that time and temperance are the two grand remedies of morbid melancholy. The symptoms of hypochondria are generally preceded by those of indigestion, though not in very many cases accompanied by them, and not unfrequently do those of hypochondria degenerate into one form or other of partial insanity; in short, hypochondria is the middle state between the vapours of dyspepsia and the delusions of monomania. One of the greatest evils of this disorder is the injustice that the invalid is exposed to from the common opinion that it is the weakness of the sufferer, and not the power of the disease, which makes his melancholy "a thing of life apart;" and the neglect of exerting his volition, which enables it to take possession of his spirits, and even of his senses. His well meaning friends see no reason why he should deem himself either sick or sorrowful, when his physician can put his finger on no one part of his frame, and say, 'Here is a disease;' or when the patient himself can point out no real evil in his prospect, and

say, 'Here is the cause of my dejection.' It is vain to tell him his sufferings are imaginary, and must be conquered by his reason, and that the shapes of horror, and the sounds of terror, which haunt and harass him by day and night, are engendered in his brain, and are the effects of a culpable indulgence in gloomy reveries. In his better moments he himself knows that it is so, but in spite of every exertion those reveries do come upon him; and instead of receding from the gulf they open beneath his feet, he feels like a timid person standing on the verge of a precipice, irresistibly impelled to fling himself from the brink on which he totters. It is worse than useless to reason with him about the absurdity of his conduct—his temper is only irritated: it is cruel to laugh at his delusions, or to try to laugh him out of them—his misery is only increased by ridicule.

It may be very true, that he exaggerates every feeling; but, as Dr. James Johnson has justly observed, "all his sensations are exaggerated, not by his voluntary act, but by the morbid sensibility of his nerves, which he cannot by any exertion of his mind prevent." Raillery, remonstrance, the best of homilies, the gravest of lectures, do not answer here; the argument must be addressed to the disordered mind, through the medium of the stomach. A well regulated regimen, and an aromatic aperient, may do more to remove the delusion of the hypochondriac, than any thing that can be said, preached, or prescribed to him.

Indigestion is often one of the accompanying symptoms of hypochondria; but, as we have before remarked, it may be often wanting in the severest forms of the disorder, yet there is great reason to regard hypochondria in no other light than that of an aggravated form of dys-

pepsia. At all events there is no shape of this disease, as Dr. J. Johnson has observed, which is not aggravated by intemperance in diet, and not mitigated by an abstemious regimen. Burton's account of the horrors of hypochondria, is one of the most graphic of all the descriptions of its sufferings. "As the rain," saith Austin, "penetrates the stone, so does this passion of melancholy penetrate the mind. It commonly accompanies men to their graves; physicians may ease, but they cannot cure it; it may lie hid for a time, but it will return again, as violently as ever, on slight occasions as well as on casual excesses. Its humour is like Mercury's weather-beaten stature, which had once been gilt; the surface was clean and uniform, but in the chinks there was still a remnant of gold: and in the purest bodies, if once tainted by hypochondria, there will be some relics of melancholy still left, not so easily to be rooted out. Seldom does this disease procure death, except (which is the most grievous calamity of all) when the patients make away with themselves—a thing familiar enough amongst them when they are driven to do violence to themselves to escape from present insufferable pain. They can take no rest in the night, or if they slumber, fearful dreams astonish them, their soul abhorreth all meat, and they are brought to death's door, being bound in misery and in iron. Like Job, they curse their stars, for Job was melancholy to despair, and almost to madness. They are weary of the sun and yet afraid to die, *vivere nolunt et mori nesciunt*. And then, like Esop's fishes, they leap from the frying-pan into the fire, when they hope to be eased by means of physic;—a miserable end to the disease when ultimately left to their fate by a jury of physicians furiously disposed; and there remains no more

to such persons, if that heavenly physician, by his grace and mercy, (whose aid alone avails,) do not heal and help them. One day of such grief as theirs, is as an hundred years : it is a plague of the sense, a convulsion of the soul, an epitome of hell ; and if there be a hell upon earth it is to be found in a melancholy man's heart ! No bodily torture is like unto it, all other griefs are swallowed up in this great Euripus. I say of the melancholy man, he is the cream and quintessence of human adversity. All other diseases are trifles to hypochondria ; it is the pith and marrow of them all ! A melancholy man is the true Prometheus, bound to Caucasus ; the true Tityus, whose bowels are still devoured by a vulture."

CHAPTER XVII.

JOHNSON CONTINUED.

Our attention was some time ago called to the peculiarities of Johnson's malady, by an attack which we heard made on his feelings and infirmities by one of the greatest of our living poets : and one of those literary ephemerals who flutter round the light of learning.

We heard it asserted that Johnson "was far behind the intelligence of his age ; that his mind was so imbued with the legends of the nursery, and the fables of superstition, that his belief extended to the visionary phantoms of both." In short, that he had neither the heavenly armour of religion, which is hope and confidence in the goodness of the Deity—nor the earthly shield of honour, which is freedom of spirit and fearlessness of death.

The minor critic, with supercilious air, spoke of the ferocious powers of the great bear of learning, the unrepresentable person of the "respectable Hottentot," who had knocked down his bookseller with one of his own folios. He inveighed against the coarseness of his manners, the tyranny of his conversation, and the uncouthness of his appearance : had the present been his day, he would hardly be tolerated in good society. An author so ignorant of the "lesser morals" as to be capable of thrusting his fingers into a sugar-basin, of rolling about his huge frame in company, to the great peril of every thing around him, would certainly not be endured

westward of Temple Bar ; and none but Boswell could be mean enough to put up with his vulgar arrogance.

We listened with patience so long as the bard was disparaging his brother ; but when the minnow of literature had the audacity to assail the Triton of erudition, to use an elegant Scotticism—our corruption rose, and though the memory of the doctor had been reviled no less by the bard than the gentleman just spoken of, we could not help expressing an opinion in an audible voice, that it was something after all to be torn to pieces by a lion, but to be gnawed to death by a rat, was too loathsome a fate for the worst malefactor.

That an author of the doctor's outward man and uncompromising manners would cut a very sorry figure in Holland house, is very possible. If Foscolo got into irretrievable disgrace for standing on a chair in the library to reach a volume, how surely would the doctor, by some unhappy exploit, some sturdy opinion or unfortunate disposition of his members, bring the vengeance of offended patronage, and outraged delicacy, on his head !

Nevertheless, Johnson was not behind the intelligence of his age, though his manners were uncompromising, his energy of character oftentimes offensive, his person ungainly, though his "local habitation" had been even eastward of Temple Bar, and though his "name" has become associated in some minds with the idea of a recondite savage. There is something in the expression "uncouth appearance" which implies vulgarity, and therefore is it that one like Pope, with a distorted figure, or like Byron with a deformed foot, is less subject to disagreeable observations, than one so "unfashionably made up" as the great lexicographer. The uncouthness of Johnson's appearance, however, was the effect of dis-

ease, and arose from no natural imperfection: "His countenance," Boswell tells us, "was naturally well formed, till he unfortunately became afflicted with scrofula, which disfigured his features, and so injured his visual nerves, that he completely lost the sight of one of his eyes." Miss Seward says, that "when at the free school, he appeared a huge, over-grown, mis-shapen stripling, but still a stupendous stripling, who even at that early life maintained his opinions with sturdy and arrogant fierceness." But the picture is overcharged, and is probably painted in the colours of his subsequent character. At a very early age he was attacked with a nervous disorder which produced twitchings and convulsive motions of the limbs that continued during life, and which have been noticed and ridiculed as eccentric habits, and tricks of gesture, that he had accustomed himself to. Sir Joshua Reynolds says, "these tricks of Dr. Johnson proceeded from a habit which he had indulged himself in, of accompanying his thoughts with certain untoward actions, and those actions always appeared to me as if they were meant to reprobate some part of his past conduct." An odd way certainly of reprobating it; but there is no occasion to refer these motions to so mysterious an origin: the cause was unquestionably the disorder of his nervous system. The violence of his temper, and the gloom which overcast his religious feelings throughout his life, were no less evidently the effects of that morbid irritability which ultimately became a fixed and permanent hypochondria. "This malady," says his biographer, "was long lurking in his constitution, and to it may be ascribed many of his peculiarities in after life: they gathered such strength in his twentieth year as to afflict him dreadfully. Before he quitted Lichfield, he

was overwhelmed with his disorder, with perpetual fretfulness, and mental despondency, which made existence miserable. From this malady he never perfectly recovered."

So great was the dejection of his spirits about this period, that he described himself at times as being unable to distinguish the hour upon the town-clock. As he advanced in life this depression increased in intensity, and differed very little from the early symptoms of Cowper's malady: the only difference was in the quality of the minds which the disease had to prey upon; the different powers of resistance of a vigorous and a vacillating intellect. On one occasion Johnson was found by Dr. Adams in a deplorable condition, sighing, groaning, and talking to himself, and restlessly walking from room to room; and when questioned about his state, declaring "he would consent to have a limb amputated to recover his spirits."

The limits which separate melancholy from madness were brought to so narrow a compass, that had his malady advanced another step, it is lamentable to think that its mastery over the powerful mind of the sufferer would probably have been permanent and complete. The tortured instrument of reason was wound up to its highest pitch, and nothing was wanting to jangle the concord of its sweet sounds but another impulse of his disorder. His peace was wholly destroyed by doubts and terrors: he speaks of his past life as a barren waste of his time, with some disorders of body and disturbance of mind very near to madness. "His melancholy," says Murphy, "was a constitutional malady, derived, perhaps, from his father, who was at times overcast with a gloom that bordered on insanity." When to this is added, that

"Johnson about the age of twenty, drew up a description of his infirmities for Dr. Swinfen, and received an answer to his letter, importing that the symptoms indicated a future privation of reason, who can doubt that an apprehension of the worst calamity that can befall humanity hung over his life, like the sword of the tyrant suspended over his head?" No one, indeed, can wonder that this terrible prognostic of insanity should cast its shadows before all his future hopes of worldly happiness: the only wonder is, that a physician could be found so ignorant of the moral duties of his calling, or so reckless of the feelings of a melancholy man, as to implant the very notion in his mind which it was his business to endeavour to eradicate if already fixed there; namely, that madness was to be the termination of his disease. Was this doctor simple enough to imagine, that there is any thing in genius which renders the intellect better able to support prospective evil, or the undisguised prognosis of a fearful malady, than the humble faculties of an ordinary mind? Simple indeed he would be to think so, and little acquainted with human nature.

But the error, we well know, is daily committed by the inexperienced, of supposing that literary men are possessed of strength of mind that may enable them to rise superior to the fears and apprehensions of the common invalid, and, consequently, that all reserve is to be laid aside, and the real condition of such patients freely and fearlessly exhibited to their view. This is a great mistake: the most powerful talents are generally united with the acutest sensibility, and in dealing with such cases the considerate physician has to encourage, and not to depress, the invalid: to temper candour with delicacy; and firmness above all things, with gentleness of

manner, and even kindness of heart. If it be essential in one disease more than another for the physician to command the confidence of his patient, to engage his respect, and to convince him of the personal interest that is taken in his health and well-being—that disease is morbid melancholy.

Johnson was wont to tell his friends, that he inherited “a vile melancholy” from his father, which made him “mad all his life—or, at least, not sober.” Insanity was the constant terror of his life; the opinion of Dr. Swinfen haunted him like a spirit of evil wherever he went; and at the very period, as Boswell observes, when he was giving the world proofs of no ordinary vigour of understanding, he actually fancied himself insane, or in a state as nearly as possible approaching to it.

Johnson's malady and Cowper's were precisely similar in the early period of each, as we have before remarked; the only difference was in the strength of mind of either sufferer. Cowper at once surrendered himself up to the tyranny of his disorder, and took a pleasure in parading the chains of his melancholy before the eyes of his correspondents, even when “immuring himself at home in the infected atmosphere of his own enthusiasm;” while Johnson struggled with his disease, sometimes indeed in a spirit of ferocious independence, and very seldom complained to his most intimate friends of his “humiliating malady.” In no point was the vigour of his intellect shown in so strong a light as in this particular; for in no malady is there so great a disposition to complain of the sufferings that are endured, and to over-state their intensity, lest, by any possibility, they should be underrated by others.

CHAPTER XVIII.

JOHNSON CONTINUED.

Johnson's disorder (if we may be allowed the expression) had three phases, the character of each of which distinguished a particular period of his career, or rather predominated at a particular period, for it cannot be said that the hues of each were not occasionally blended. At twenty, however, his despondency was of a religious kind: about forty-five "his melancholy was at its meridian," and then had the shape of a fierce irritability, venting itself in irascibility of temper, and fits of capricious arrogance.

At the full period of "three-score years and ten," the leading symptom of his hypochondria was "the apprehension of death, and every day appeared to aggravate his terrors of the grave." This was "the black dog" that worried him to the last moment. Metastasio, we are told, never permitted the word death to be pronounced in his presence; and Johnson was so agitated by having the subject spoken of in his hearing, that on one occasion he insulted Boswell for introducing the topic, and in the words of the latter, he had put "his head into the lion's mouth a great many times with comparative safety, but at last had it bitten off."

"For many years before his death," says Arthur Murphy, "so terrible was the prospect of death, that when he was not disposed to enter into the conversation that

was going forward, whoever sat near his chair might hear him repeating those lines of Shakspeare—

“To die and go we know not where.”

He acknowledged to Boswell he never had a moment in which death was not terrible to him ; and even at the age of sixty-nine he says he had made no approaches to a state in which he could look upon death without terror.

At seventy-five, we find him writing to his friends to consult all the eminent physicians of their acquaintance on his case. To his kind and excellent physician, Dr. Brocklesby, he writes, “I am loth to think that I grow worse, but cannot prove to my own partiality that I grow much better. Pray be so kind as to have me in your thoughts, and mention my case to others as you have opportunity.” Boswell, at the same time, in Scotland, was employed in consulting the most eminent physicians of that country for him. In his last illness, when a friend of his told him he was glad to see him looking better, Johnson seized him by the hand, and exclaimed, “You are one of the kindest friends I ever had.” It is curious to observe with what sophistry he sometimes endeavoured to persuade himself and others of the salutary nature of his excessive terrors on this head : he tells one friend that it is only the best men who tremble at the thoughts of futurity, because they are the most aware of the purity of that place which they hope to reach. To another, he writes that he never thought confidence with respect to futurity, any part of the character of a brave, a wise, or a good man. His executor, Sir John Hawkins, who lets no opportunity pass to blacken his character,

speaks of his fear of death in terms which imply some crime of extraordinary magnitude weighing on his heart; it was with difficulty, he says, he could persuade him to execute a will, apparently as if he feared his doing so would hasten his dissolution. Three or four days before his death, he declared he would give one of his legs for a year more of life. When the Rev. Mr. Sastres called upon him, Johnson stretched forth his hand, and exclaimed in a melancholy tone, "Jam moriturus!" But the ruling passion of his disease was still strong in death; for at his own suggestion, when his surgeon was making slight incisions in his leg with the idea of relieving his dropsical disorder, Johnson cried out, "Deeper, deeper; I want length of life, and you are afraid of giving me pain, which I do not value."

"On the very last day of his existence," says Murphy, "the desire of life returned with all its former vehemence; he still imagined that by puncturing his legs relief might be obtained. At eight in the morning he tried the experiment, but no water followed." If Johnson's fear of death were not the effect of disease, it would be impossible to contemplate his conduct either in sickness or in sorrow, in his closet or in his death-bed, without feelings of absolute disgust. What other sentiment could be entertained

"For him who crawls enamoured of decay,
Clings to his couch, and sickens years away,"

and shudders at the breath of every word which reminds him of the grave? The bravest man that ever lived may not encounter death without fear, nor the best Christian envisage eternity with unconcern; but there is a dif-

ference between the feelings of either, and the slavish terrors of a coward in extremity. There is a distinction, moreover, which is still more worthy of observation—the wide distinction between the fear of death that springs from an inherent baseness of disposition, and that apprehension of it which arises from the depressing influence of a disease. Who can doubt that Johnson's morbid feelings on this point were occasioned by hypochondria? and what medical man, at least, is not aware that the fear of death is as inseparable a companion of hypochondria as preternatural heat is a symptom of fever?

We have now a few observations to make on the subject of Johnson's superstition; and we preface them with an observation of Melancthon, which deserves the attention of all literary men. "Melancholy" (says this amiable man, who had been himself its victim) "is so frequent and troublesome a disease, that it is necessary for every body to know its accidents, and a dangerous thing to be ignorant of them." One of these "accidents" is to confound the ideas of possible occurrences with those of probable events—a disposition to embody the phantoms of imagination, to clothe visions of enthusiasm in forms cognizable to the senses, and familiar to the sight; in short to give to "airy nothings a local habitation and a name."

This disposition was the secret of Rousseau's phantom, that scarcely ever quitted him for a day; of Luther's demons, with whom he communed in the solitude of his study; of Cowper's messenger, bearing the sentence of eternal reprobation; of Tasso's spirits gliding on a sunbeam; of Mozart's "man in black," the harbinger of death, who visited his dwelling a few days before his decease; and of Johnson's belief in the existence of ghosts, and the ministering agency of departed spirits.

His sentiments on these subjects, though expressed in a work of fiction, are well known to have been his deliberate opinions. "That the dead are seen no more I will not undertake to maintain against the concurrent and unvaried testimony of all ages and of all nations. There are no people, rude or learned, among whom apparitions of the dead are not related or believed. This opinion, which perhaps prevails as far as human nature is diffused, could become universal only by its truth."

This is the language of the hypochondriac, not of the moralist, who in the exercise of a sober judgment must have known that the concurrent testimony of all experience and philosophy was opposed to the opinion that those who are once buried are seen again in this world.

There are many of what are called the peculiarities of Johnson's superstition, which excite surprise, but are not generally known to be the characteristic symptoms of hypochondria. "He had one peculiarity," says Boswell, "of which none of his friends ever ventured to ask an explanation. This was an anxious care to go out or in at a door, or passage, by a certain number of steps from a certain point, so as that either his right or left foot, I forget which, should constantly make the first actual movement. Thus, upon innumerable occasions, I have seen him suddenly stop, and then seem to count his steps with deep earnestness, and when he had neglected, or gone wrong, in this sort of magical movement, I have seen him go back again, put himself in a proper posture to begin the ceremony, and having gone through it, break from his abstraction, walk briskly on, and join his companion."—"Sir Joshua Reynolds has observed him go a long way about rather than cross a particular alley." His piety, we are told by Murphy, in some instances

bordered on superstition, that he thought it not more strange that there should be evil spirits than evil men; and even that the question of second sight held him in suspense. He was likewise in the habit of imposing on himself voluntary penance for every little defect, going through the day with only one cup of tea without milk, and at other times abstaining from animal food.

He appears likewise to have had a superstitious notion of the efficacy of repeating a detached sentence of a prayer over and over, somewhat in the manner of a Turkish devotee, who limits himself daily to the repetition of a particular verse of the Koran. "His friend, Mr. Davies," says Boswell, "of whom Charchill says, 'that Davies hath a very pretty wife,' when Johnson began his repetition of 'lead us not into temptation,' used to whisper Mrs. Davies, 'you, my dear, are the cause of this.'" Many of these habits, however, if they were weaknesses, were the weaknesses of a pious and a good man, and were the result of early religious impressions, instilled into his mind by his mother "with assiduity," but, in his opinion, "not with judgment." Sunday, he said, was a heavy day to him: when he was a boy he was confined on that day to the perusal of the *Whole Duty of Man*, from a great part of which he could derive no instruction. "A boy," he says, "should be introduced to such books by having his attention directed to the arrangement, to the style, and other excellences of composition; that the mind being thus engaged by an amusing variety of objects, may not grow weary." Be this as it may, his superstitious notions and observances were encouraged, if not caused, by his disease.

CHAPTER XIX.

JOHNSON CONTINUED.

The indefatigable Burton has ransacked all medical authorities ancient and modern, for the symptoms of hypochondria; and amongst those he has enumerated, there is not one of Johnson's miscalled peculiarities, which is not to be found. "Many of these melancholy men," says Burton, "are sad, and not fearful—some fearful and not sad."——(Johnson, for instance, groaning in his chamber, as Dr. Adams found him, and at another period knocking down a bookseller in his own shop.) "Some fear death, and yet, in a contrary humour, make away with themselves." (Johnson, indeed, did not commit suicide, but his fear of death was never surpassed.) "Others are troubled with scruples of conscience, distrusting God's mercies, thinking the devil will have them, and making great lamentations." (Similar qualms and apprehensions harassed the doctor to his latest hour.) "One durst not walk alone from home for fear he should swoon or die." (The terror of such an occurrence probably contributed to confine the great moralist for so many years to his beloved Fleet Street.) "A second fears all old women as witches, and every black dog or cat he sees he suspecteth to be a devil." (Whether he believed in the witchery of old women, or young, we know not, but he was unwilling however to deny their power, and the black dog that worried him at home was the demon of hypochondria.)

"A third dares not go over a bridge, or come near a pool, rock, or steep hill." (Johnson dared not pass a particular alley in Leicester Square.) "The terror of some particular death troubles others—they are troubled in mind as if they had committed a murder." (The constraint dread of insanity we have already noticed, and the construction put on his expressions of remorse by Sir John Hawkins.) "Some look as if they had just come out of the den of Trophonius, and though they laugh many times, and look extraordinary merry, yet are they extremely lumpish again in a minute; dull and heavy, *semel et simul*, sad and merry, but most part sad." (The den of Trophonius was his gloomy abode in Bolt Court, whence he sallied forth at night-fall, on his visit to the Mitre, and the gaiety and gloom have a parallel in the state of his spirits when at the university, such as extorted the melancholy denial to Dr. Adams of having been a "gay and frolicsome fellow" at college—"O, sir, I was mad, and violent, but it was bitterness which they mistook for frolic.") "Yet, for all this," continues Burton, summing up his account of the "madness of melancholy," in the words of an old author, "in all these things these people may be wise, staid, discreet, and do nothing unbeseeming their dignity, place, or person—this foolish and ridiculous fear excepted, which continually tortures and crucifies their souls."

The habits of Dr. Johnson were most unfavourable to health—he was a late riser, a large eater, indolent and inactive. In the intervals of his disorder he laboured for a time to counteract the effects of these habits, and he so far succeeded in controlling his disease as to be able to divert those distressing thoughts, which it was a folly, he said, to combat with. To think them down,

he told Boswell, was impossible, but to acquire the power of managing the mind he looked upon as an art, that might be attained in a great degree by experience and exercise. "Upon the first attack of his disorder," says Boswell, "he strove to overcome it by forcible exertion, and frequently walked to Birmingham and back again, and tried many other expedients, but all in vain; his expression to me was, 'I did not then know how to manage my disorder.'" One of the ways he proposed accomplishing this end was by continually occupying his mind, without fatiguing it, either by day, repeating certain words, in counting a certain number of steps; or at night, when wakefully disturbed, by burning a lamp in his bed-room, taking a book, and thus composing himself to rest. His grand precept was, "if you are idle be not solitary, if you are solitary be not idle." The great secret, however, of this management of mind appears to have been a periodical fit of abstinence, persevered in so long as the violence of any new attack of his malady was upon him. He was far from temperate in the pleasures of the table; he could drink his three bottles of wine, he says, and not be the worse for it; the capacity of his stomach we doubt not, but its invulnerability is very questionable. The doctor, like the "great child of honour," was a "man of an unbounded stomach." Generally speaking, he fed grossly; he even boasted of his veneration for good living, and spoke of "one unmindful of his belly as likely to be unmindful of every thing else." He sometimes talked with contempt of people gratifying their palates. Yet, when at table, Boswell says, "he was totally absorbed in the business of the moment; his looks were riveted to his plate, nor would he hardly speak a word, or pay any

attention to what was said by others till he had satisfied his appetite, which was so fierce, and indulged with such intemperance, that while in the act of eating, the veins of his forehead swelled, and the perspiration on his features was visible." Nothing could induce him to go to an evening *cottiversazione*, where there were no refreshments. "It will never do, sir; a man does not like to go to a place from which he comes out exactly as he went in." There can be very little doubt but that he aggravated his disorder by improper living, and drank more port wine than was likely to be of service to a man of sedentary habits—this was his favourite potation. "Bordeaux was a wine," he said, "in which a man might be drowned before it made him drunk; no claret for me, sir—poor stuff—it is the liquor for boys; Port is the drink for men."

At fifty, however, his increasing ailments obliged him to give up wine altogether for near twenty years, but at the age of seventy-two he returned again to the use of it. "Still every thing about his character," says Boswell, "was forcible and violent, there never was any moderation; many a day did he fast, many a day did he refrain from wine; but when he did eat, it was voraciously—when he did drink, it was copiously." During the period that he abstained from wine, he betook himself to the use of tea, but he was as intemperate a tea-drinker, as he had been formerly a wine-bibber. "The quantities," says Boswell, "which he drank of it at all hours was so great, that his nerves must have been uncommonly strong not to have been extremely relaxed by such an immoderate use of it." But, perhaps, one of the most injurious of his habits was the late hours, at all periods of his life, that he was in the habit of keep-

ing. Like all hypochondriacs, he was a bad sleeper, and when sleepless he was accustomed, to use his own words, "to read in bed like a Turk"—not one of the doctor's happiest similes: by the way—the Turk neither reads in bed nor out of it. In one of his letters, he says, "his life, from his earliest years, was wasted in a morning bed." "He has been often heard to relate," we are told by Murphy, "that he and Savage walked round Grosvenor Square till four in the morning; in the course of their conversation reforming the world, &c. until fatigued at length they began to feel the want of refreshment, but could not muster more than four-pence half-penny." There is a trifling inaccuracy in this account; St. James's, and not Grosvenor Square, was the scene of their nocturnal ramble. Poor Savage has been unjustly charged with being the cause of all the doctor's disorders, but at the age of forty-three we find him as disposed as ever for a ramble at unseasonable hours. On one occasion Beauclerk and Langton rapped him up at three in the morning, to prevail on him to accompany them. "The doctor," says Boswell, "made his appearance in his shirt, with his little black wig on the top of his head instead of a night-cap, and a poker in his hand, imagining that some ruffians had come to attack him; when he discovered who they were, and what their errand, he smiled with great good humour and agreed to their proposal. 'What! is it you, you dogs! I'll have a frisk with you.'" These habits, and the excesses they led to, were the fuel which fed his hypochondria; his occasional abstinence the damper which every now and then controlled its fury.

On his first arrival in London, abstemiousness was forced upon him by poverty, and in all probability it was

his temperance at that critical period of his disorder, that enabled him to lay in a stock of bodily vigour which he might not have otherwise possessed. The man who could style himself *Impransus*, in his application to a publisher, or who was so reduced as to be arrested for a debt of five pounds, for the common necessities of life, could not have been very luxurious in his living. Yet this was one of "the sweet uses of adversity," he might then have little dreamt of, for the necessary abstemiousness he then practised, gave his constitution time to repair its shattered energies, and to invigorate him for a long and arduous campaign in the literary world. Subsequently, when the gloom of his disorder drove him into company to escape from the tyranny of his own sad thoughts, he contracted habits of conviviality, and to use one of his own grandiloquent terms, of gulosity, which rendered his vigils not only pleasing to the rosy god, but his taste for the good things of the table, a passion which "a whole synod of cooks" could hardly gratify. Poor Boswell complained that he was half killed with his irregularities in the doctor's company. Port, and late hours with Johnson, had ruined his nerves; but his friend consoled him with the assurance that it was better to be palsied at eighteen, than not keep company with such a man.

Quæ ad vinum, Johnson loved his wine probably better than Burns did his whiskey; our great moralist loved it for its flavour, but the unfortunate bard liked it for its effects. The one flew to it for enjoyment, the other for relief; it was the difference between food and physic—between mirth and madness. The power of abstaining from "the inordinate cup that is unblessed" contrasts the

vigor of Johnson's mind with the lamentable weakness of Burns : the one could not abstain for a single day, while the other could give up his wine for twenty years, although he seemed to think not a little of the deprivation. It was a great deduction, he told Boswell, from the pleasures of life, not to drink wine.

CHAPTER XVI.

JOHNSON CONTINUED.

His health began to break down about fifteen years before his death. "In 1766, his constitution," says Murphy, "seemed to be in a rapid decline, and that morbid melancholy which often clouded his understanding, came upon him with a deeper gloom than ever. Mr. and Mrs. Thrale paid him a visit in this situation, and found him on his knees with a clergyman, beseeching God to continue to him the use of his understanding." From this period to his seventy-third year his fits of melancholy were frequent and severe, though he continued to go into society as before; but lively as his conversation was at all times, his gaiety, he said, was all on the outside. "I may be cracking my jokes, and yet cursing the sun—sun, how I hate thy beams!"

In 1782, he complains of being "afflicted with a very irksome and severe disorder, that his respiration was impeded, and much blood had been taken away." His disorder was asthma: it appears that he was repeatedly bled for it, and subsequently the only relief he could obtain was by the daily use of opium to the extent of three or four grains. The propriety of this bleeding, at the age of seventy-three, for a spasmodic malady, which was capable of being relieved by opium, is more than questionable; there can, indeed, be very little doubt that it was fatal to the powers of his constitution, and that the

palsy and dropsy which very soon ensued, were the effects of the debility so great a loss of blood occasioned. The diseases of old men whose vital energies have been expended in literary pursuits are seldom to be remedied by the lancet, and when employed in such cases, it is very often "the little instrument of mighty mischief," which Reid has termed it. About a year after his first attack of asthma, during which time he was frequently bled for the disorder, he was seized with palsy, that malady which literary men more than any other have reason to guard against. The vigour of his great mind was manifested on this occasion in communicating the intelligence of his calamity to one of his friends. A few hours only after his attack, while he was deprived of speech, and of the power of moving from his bed, he so far triumphed over his infirmities as to write to Dr. Taylor the following account of his condition. "It has pleased God, by a paralytic stroke in the night, to deprive me of speech. I am very desirous of Dr. Heberden's assistance, as I think my case is not past remedy. Let me see you as soon as it is possible; bring Dr. Heberden with you, if you can; but come yourself at all events. I am glad you are so well, when I am so dreadfully attacked. I think that by a speedy application of stimulants, much may be done. I question if a vomit, vigorous and rough, would not rouse the organs of speech to action. As it is too early to send, I will try to recollect what I can that may be suspected to have brought on this dreadful disease. I have been accustomed to bleed frequently for an asthmatic complaint, but have forbore some time by Dr. Pepy's persuasion, who perceived my legs beginning to swell."

How strongly is the powerful intellect of Johnson, (yet

unimpaired by his disorder,) shown in these few emphatic words ! The urgency of the case, the necessity for prompt assistance, and the consciousness of the debility that had been brought on his constitution by so much depletion ; and yet what extraordinary ignorance of the common principles of medicine is exhibited in the remedial plan he proposes for his relief ! The merest tyro in the medical art would have seen nothing in the administration of the vomit vigorous and rough, but the prospect of aggravated danger, of increased determination to the head, and even of sudden death, though he might be aware that such a remedy had the sanction of some recent authorities.

The treatment of diseases is not, however, the subject we have to do with ; we have only noticed a circumstance which proves how very ignorant of the principles of medicine, and of the nature of a disease which literary men are especially subject to, the most learned persons are frequently found to be.

Johnson survived his attack of paralysis a year and a half, during which time he laboured under a complication of disorders, gout, asthma, and dropsy, which rendered his life miserable, but yet did not prevent him from performing a journey to his native town, and from engaging on his return in his literary pursuits.

Johnson was one of those few fortunate children of genius who have not to complain of the tardy justice of their times : his great merit in his lifetime was universally acknowledged, and public as well as private admiration and gratitude were not limited to the justice that his memory was entitled to, but were displayed in acts of generosity that were calculated to reward the exertions of the living man, and to increase his comforts in

sickness and distress. There was no subscription at his death for the purchase of his Bolt-court tenement, to bestow on Mrs. Lucy Porter, of Lichfield, and her descendants—there was no appeal made to the pockets of the public for the erection of a pillar to perpetuate his fame ; but the bounty of his sovereign was extended to him in his indigence, and in the hour of sickness the beneficent hand of private friendship and of public benevolence was held forth to him. When there was a question of enabling him to visit Italy for the recovery of his health, Lord Thurlow, we are told, offered five hundred pounds to meet the expenses of his journey : and his amiable physician, Dr. Brocklesby, signified his intention of adding a hundred a year to his income for life, in order that he might not want the means of giving to the remainder of his days tranquillity and comfort. The conduct of Brocklesby was worthy of the just and elegant compliment which Johnson paid to his profession, in his life of Garth. “ I believe every man has found in physicians great liberality and dignity of sentiment, very prompt effusions of beneficence, and willingness to exert a lucrative art where there is no hope of lucre.”

Johnson continued to struggle with his complaints till the latter part of 1784. His earnest and constant prayer, that he might be permitted to deliver up his soul unclouded to God, was granted : he died in his perfect senses, resigned to his situation, at peace with himself and in charity with all men, in his seventy-fifth year.

The circumstances that we have noticed, connected with the disorder of this great and good man, are amply sufficient to show that the many striking inconsistencies and eccentricities in his character and conduct, were occasioned by disease, or fostered by its influence. His

original disorder, it is evident, was a scrofulous affection, which in early life debilitated his constitution, and gave that predisposition to hypochondria which dogged his whole career.

Hahneman, one of the best observers of disease (whatever his character as a pharmaceutical theorist may be) that medical science has to boast of, attributes half the disorders of humanity to a scrofulous or scorbutic taint in the constitution, and that such a taint is calculated to nurture and develop the seeds of an hereditary disease like that of Johnson's hypochondria, there can be little doubt. At all events, if proof were requisite, we trust sufficient has been adduced to show that Johnson's failings were largely influenced by the infirmities of disease, and were foreign to the original complexion of his disposition and the character of his noble nature.

CHAPTER XXI.

BURNS.

Every quarter of a century a revolution takes place in literary taste, the old idols of its worship are displaced for newer effigies, but the ancient altars are only overthrown to be re-established at some future time, and to receive the homage which they forfeited, on account of the fickleness of their votaries, and not in consequence of any demerits of their own.

It is not in the nature of Burns' productions that his fame should altogether set aside the remembrance of his follies; yet so ably and so philosophically has his biographer discharged his duty to the public and to the individual, whose genius he helped to immortalise, and so truly, in the spirit of a philosophical historian, has he traced the infirmities of Burns to their real origin, that were it only for the noble effort to vindicate the character of genius, Currie's *Life of Burns* would still deserve to be considered one of the best specimens of biography in the English language. And so long as its excellence had the freshness of a new performance to recommend it to the public, and to lay hold of its attention, the character of Burns was treated with indulgence, and his poetry was duly and justly appreciated.

But of late years there has been a tendency, in literary opinion, to underrate the merits of the Scottish bard, and even to exaggerate the failings of the man. The

vulgarity of his errors and his unfortunate predilection for pipes and punch-bowls, it is incumbent on every sober critic to reprobate. Byron, who in his aristocratic mood, had no notion of a poor man "holding the patent of his honours direct from God Almighty," could not tolerate the addiction of a bard to such ungentlemanly habits, and Burns was, therefore, in the eyes of the proud lord, a "strange compound of dirt and deity;" but his lordship, at the time of the observation, was in one of his fits of outrageous abstinence, and to use his own language, "had no more charity than a vinegar cruet."

Bulwer has also lately joined in depreciating the poor exciseman. It is the more to be regretted, as he has the credit of possessing more generosity of literary feelings, and less of the jealousy of genius, than most of his compeers.

Burns' fame has certainly declined in the fashionable world; but if it be any consolation to his spirit, his poetry continues as popular as ever with the poor. Its exquisite pathos has lost nothing of its original charm, but no volume is less the book of the boudoir—the fastidious imagination can hardly associate the idea of poetry with that of an atmosphere that is redolent of tobacco smoke and spirituous liquors.

The frailties of Burns are unfortunately too glaring to admit of palliation; but manifest as they are, much misapprehension we are persuaded prevails as to their character; a dog with a bad name is not in greater peril of a halter, than a poor man's errors are in danger of exciting unmitigated disgust.

In fashionable morality it is one thing to drink the "inordinate cup that is unblest" of claret or champagne, but quite another to "put an enemy in the mouth to steal

away the senses" in the shape of whisky; similar effects may arise from both, but the odium is not a little in the quality, and not the quantity, of the potation. In the parlance of convivial gentlemen, to have a bout at the Clarendon is to exceed in the pleasures of the table; but to commit the same excess in a country ale-house, is to be in a state of disgusting intoxication. There is no question, however, but that wine is a "more gentlemanly tippie" than any kind of ardent spirits, and that its intoxicating effect is an "*amabilis insania*" of a milder character than the "*rabia furibunda*" which belongs to the latter. The excesses of the wine-bibber, moreover, are generally few and far between, while those of the dram-drinker are frequent, and infinitely more injurious to mind and body. In this country the poor man is debarred the use of wine; spirits are unfortunately the cheaper stimulant; but were it a matter of choice, he might prefer the former, as well as the French and Italian peasant.

There is one circumstance, however, which deserves consideration in forming any comparative estimate of intemperate habits. Different constitutions are differently effected by the same excitants. Johnson could boast of drinking his three bottles of port wine with impunity; but the doctor's was an "*omni vorantia gula*." Dr. Parr could master two without any inconvenience, but probably had Burns dined with either of them, he would have found the half of a Scotch pint might have caused him in the morning "to have remembered a mass of things, but nought distinctly," and to conclude he had been drinking the *vinum erroris ab ebris doctoribus propinatum*," as St. Austin denominates another inebriating agent. The sin of intemperance is certainly the same whether it be caus-

ed by one bottle or three, or whether the alcohol be concentrated in one form, or more largely diluted in another.

In Burns' time intemperance was much more common in his walk of life than it now is. In Pope's day we find not a few of his most celebrated contemporaries and immediate predecessors addicted to drunkenness. "Cowley's death (Pope says) was occasioned by a mean accident while his great friend Dean Pratt was on a visit with him at Chertsey. They had been together to see a neighbour of Cowley's, who (according to the fashion of the times) made them too welcome. They did not set out on their walk home till it was too late, and had drank so deep, that they lay out in the fields all night. This gave Cowley the fever that carried him off."

Dryden, like Burns, was remarkable for sobriety in early life, "but for the last ten years of his life, (says Dennis,) he was much acquainted with Addison, and drank with him even more than he ever used to do, probably so far as to hasten his end." Yet in his case, as Byron's, wine seems to have had no exhilarating influence. Speaking of his melancholy, he says, "Nor wine nor love could make me gay." And Byron speaks of wine making him "savage instead of mirthful."

Parnell, also, (on Pope's authority,) "was a great follower of drams, and strangely open and scandalous in his debaucheries, (his excesses, however, only commenced after the death of his wife, whom he tenderly loved,) and "those helps," he adds, that sorrow first called in for assistance, habit soon rendered necessary, and he died in his thirty-sixth year, in some measure a martyr to conjugal fidelity, somewhat we presume in the way.

"Of Lord Mount-Coffee-house, the British peer,
Who died of love with wine last year."

But another account describes Parnell's taking to drunkenness on account of his prospect declining as a preacher at the queen's death, "and so he became a sot, and finished his existence."

Churchill was found drunk on a dunghill.

Prior, according to Spencer, "used to bury himself for whole days and nights together with a poor mean creature, his celebrated Chloe," who, unlike Ronsard's Cassandra, was the bar-maid of the house he frequented. And even Pope, we are told by Dr. King, hastened his end by drinking spirits.

Precedents, however, are no plea for crime, and to multiply them would be useless for any other purpose than to deprecate the infliction of an excessive penalty in a single instance, because the latest though not perhaps the most enormous.

If Burns' irregularity deserved the name of habitual intemperance, it was only during the latter years of his life. Till his three-and-twentieth year, he was remarkable for his sobriety, no less than for the modesty of his behaviour. Had he continued at the plough, in all probability he would have remained a stranger to the vices that his new career unfortunately led him into. It was only, (he tells us,) when he became an author, that he got accustomed to excess, and when his friends made him an exciseman, that his casual indulgence in convivial pleasures acquired the dominion of a settled habit.

In early life he laboured under a disorder of the stomach, accompanied by palpitations of the heart, depression of the spirits, and nervous pains in the head, the nature of which he never appears to have understood, but which evidently arose from dyspepsia. These sufferings, be it remembered, are complained of in his latter years

before he had committed any excess; and so far from being the consequence of intemperance, as they are generally considered to have been, the exhaustion they produced was probably the cause which drove him in his moments of hypochondria, to the excitement of the bottle for a temporary palliation of his symptoms.

No one but a dyspeptic man, who is acquainted with the moral martyrdom of the disease, can understand the degree of exhaustion to which the mind is reduced, and the insupportable sense of sinking in every organ of the body which drives the sufferer to the use of stimulants of one kind or another. Whether wine, alcohol, ammonia, or the black drop, it is still the want of a remedy, and not the pleasure of the indulgence which sends the hypochondriac to that stimulant for relief.

In one of Burns' letters to Dr. Moore, he mentions being confined by some lingering complaints originating in the stomach, and his constitutional melancholy being increased to such a degree, that for three months he was in a state of mind scarcely to be envied by the hopeless wretches who had received their final mittimus. From the period of his first committing "the sin of rhyme," which was a little previous to his sixteenth year, to the age of three-and-twenty, the excitement of the tender passion, which he appears to have felt not unfrequently in the fits of his hypochondria, seem to have had the effect of soothing the dejection, which in later life he employed other means to alleviate.

His biographer has noticed, as a curious fact, that his melancholy was always banished in the presence of women. "In his youth," we are told by his brother Gilbert, "he was constantly the victim of some fair enslaver; but these connections were governed by the strictest rules of

virtue and modesty, from which he never deviated till his twenty-third year. He was only anxious to be in a situation to marry: nor do I recollect," he says, "till towards the era of his commencing author, when his growing celebrity occasioned his being often in company, to have ever seen him intoxicated, nor was he at all given to drinking. No sooner, however, was he led into intemperance than his disorder became aggravated, and his dejection, from being a casual occurrence, became continual."

"The gaiety," says Currie, "of many of Burns' writings, and the lively and even cheerful colouring with which he has portrayed his own character, may lead some persons to suppose that the melancholy which hung over him toward the end of his days was not an original part of his constitution. It is not to be doubted, indeed, that this melancholy acquired a darker hue in the progress of his life; but independent of his own and his brother's testimony, evidence is to be found among his papers that he was subject very early to those depressions of mind which are, perhaps, not wholly separable from the sensibility of genius, but which in him arose to an extraordinary degree."

At the age of twenty-two he writes to his father, "that the weakness of his nerves has so debilitated his mind, that he dare not review past events, nor look forward into futurity, for the least anxiety or perturbation in his head produced most unhappy effects on his whole frame." This was previous to his intemperance.

In 1787 Dugald Stewart occasionally saw him in Ayrshire; "and notwithstanding," says the professor, "the various reports I heard during the preceding winter of Burns' predilection for convivial and not very select so-

ciety, I should have concluded in favour of his habits of sobriety from all of him that ever fell under my own observation: he told me indeed himself, that the weakness of his stomach was such as to deprive him entirely of any merit in his temperance. I was, however, somewhat alarmed about the effects of his now sedentary and luxurious life, when he confessed to me, the first night he spent in my house, after his winter's campaign in town, that he had been disturbed, when in bed, by a palpitation of the heart, which he said was a complaint to which he had of late become subject."

His winter campaign in town had been injurious indeed to his habits, and he was so conscious of the perils he was daily encountering, as to be desirous of fleeing from the scene of temptation.

Having settled with his publisher, Burns found himself master of nearly five hundred pounds, two hundred of which he immediately lent to his brother, who had taken upon himself the support of their aged mother; with the remainder of his money he purchased the farm of Ellisland, on which he determined to settle himself for life. His first act was to legalise his union with the object of his early attachment, which union then imperatively called for a public declaration of marriage.

The natural fickleness of his disposition, however, was soon manifested in his new career; and he had hardly entered upon the peaceful enjoyment of country life before he pined after the distinction of a maiden author's brief reign in literary society. The state of his feelings may be gathered at the time from his common-place book. "This is now the third day that I have been in this country. Lord! what is man? What a bustling little bundle of passions, appetites, ideas and fancies!—

and what a capricious kind of existence he has here! I am such a coward in life—so tired in the service, that I would almost at any time, with Milton's Adam,

“ ‘Gladly lay me in my mother's lap at ease.’ ”

“ His application to the cares and labours of his farm, (says Currie,) was interrupted by several visits to his family in Ayrshire, and as the distance was too great for a single day's journey, he sometimes fell into company, and forgot the resolutions he had formed, and in a little time temptation assailed him nearer home. It was not long before he began to view his farm with dislike and despondence.”

He now applied to his friends to procure him some appointment, by the interest of one of them he procured the post of an exciseman, or gauger, in the district in which he lived.* It was an unfortunate employment

* In the Edinburgh Review some time since, we marked the following striking sentences in relation to Burns:—“ And this was he for whom the world found no fitter business than quarreling with smugglers and vinters, computing excise dues upon tallow, and gauging alebarrels! In such toils was that mighty spirit sorrowfully wasted; and a hundred years may pass on, before another such is given us to waste.” The same writer, after summing up Burns' attainments, says, “ He had as much scholarship, we imagine, as Shakespeare, and far better models to form his ear to harmony, and train his fancy to graceful invention.”

“ Burns is undoubtedly entitled to the rank of a great and original genius. He has in all his compositions great force of conception; and great spirit and animation in its expression. He has taken a large range through the region of fancy, and naturalised himself in almost all her climates: He has great humour, great

for a man like Burns, and one which threw all the temptations in his path, which a judicious friend might have wished him removed from as far as possible. It must have been a sorry exhibition to have seen the poor poet, his mind probably communing with the skies, stampering over the country in pursuit of some paltry defaulter of the revenue, or travelling from ale-house to ale-house to grant permits, and do the other drudgery

powers of description, great pathos, and great discrimination of character. Almost every thing that he says has spirit and originality; and every thing that he says well is characterised by a charming facility, which gives a grace even to occasional rudeness, and communicates to the reader a delightful sympathy with the spontaneous soaring and conscious inspiration of the poet. He found himself *originally* in the deepest obscurity, without help, without instruction, without model, or with models only of the meanest sort. An educated man stands, as it were, in the midst of a boundless arsenal and magazine, filled with all the weapons and engines which man's skill has been able to devise from the earliest time; and he works, accordingly, with a strength borrowed from all past ages. How different is his state who stands on the outside of that storehouse, and feels that its gates must be stormed, or remain for ever shut against him! His means are the commonest and rudest: the mere work done is no measure of his strength. A dwarf believed a steam-engine may remove mountains; but no dwarf will hew them down with the pickaxe; and he must be a Titan that furls them abroad with his arms.—Though a Titan, to the ill-starved Burns was given the power of making man's life more venerable, but that of wisely guiding his own was not given, and the world has rarely witnessed a sadder scene than this noble, generous, and great soul wasting itself away in hopeless struggle with base entanglements, which coiled closer and closer around him, till only Death opened him an outlet.”—*Ed.*

of his office : such business is rarely transacted without refreshment, and sometimes the refreshment of man and horse is the only business attended to.

It would have been difficult to have devised a worse occupation for the poor poet, or to have found a man less fitted for its duties than Burns.

After occupying his farm for nearly three years and a half, he found it necessary to resign it, and depend on the miserable stipend of his office—about fifty pounds a year, and which ultimately rose to seventy.

“Hitherto,” says Currie, “though he was addicted to excess in social parties, he had abstained from the habitual use of strong liquors, and his constitution had not suffered any permanent injury from the irregularities of his conduct. But in Dumfries, temptations to the sin that so early beset him throw themselves in his way, and his irregularities grew by degrees into habits.” In his own words, “he had dwindled into a paltry excise-man, and slunk out the rest of his insignificant existence in the meanest of pursuits, and among the lowest of mankind.”

From this period poverty, and its attendant ills, were seldom from his door ; the irritability of his temper increased, and, as is generally the case, the irregularity of his conduct. He became more reckless and inveterate in his disorders than ever : “He knew his own failings,” says Currie, “he predicted their consequence ; the melancholy foreboding was never absent from his mind, yet this passion carried him down the stream of error, and swept him over the precipice he saw directly in his course.”

“The fatal defect in his character,” adds his biographer, “lay in the comparative weakness of his volition

—that superior faculty of the mind, which governs the conduct according to the dictates of the understanding, and alone entitles us to be denominated rational.”

“The occupations of a poet,” he continues, “are not calculated to strengthen the governing powers of the mind, or to weaken that sensibility which requires perpetual control, since it gives birth to the vehemence of passion, as well as the higher powers of imagination. Unfortunately, the favourite occupations of genius are calculated to increase all its peculiarities, to nourish that lofty pride which disdains the littleness of prudence, and the restrictions of order, and, by indulgence, to increase that sensibility which, in the present form of our existence, is scarcely compatible with peace and happiness, even when accompanied with the choicest gifts of fortune !”

This is worth all that has ever been said on the subject of “the poetic temperament,” and no apology, we trust, is needed for the length of the quotation.

The rapid progress of his disorder, both bodily and mental, is exhibited in the desponding tenor of his letters, from the period of his relinquishing his agricultural pursuits. Indolence, the baneful attendant of morbid sensibility, aggravated his hypochondria. Idleness became preferable to a distasteful occupation; and idleness, as usual, was followed by miseries which rendered existence intolerable without excitement. There is no habit gains so imperceptibly on the hypochondriac as that of intemperance. The melancholy man flies to stimulating draughts for a momentary relief, but the remedy must be increased in proportion to the frequency of its repetition; and in proportion as the spirits are exalted by any stimulant the stomach is debilitated: in

course of time the irritability of the latter organ, extending to the brain, the senses become tremblingly alive (if *the expression* may be used) to external impressions; in a word, the sensations are diseased, and the result is morbid sensibility. Burns' biographer has described the progress of this disorder in language which needs not our feeble praise to recommend it. "As the strength of the body decays, the volition fails; in proportion as the sensations are soothed and gratified, the sensibility increases; and morbid sensibility is the parent of indolence, because, while it impairs the regulating power of the mind, it exaggerates all the obstacles to exertion." And, in the preceding observation, in speaking of morbid sensibility, as being the temperament of general talents, and not of poetry exclusively, as some would have it, he deprecates the indulgence in indolence, which men of genius are generally prone to, as the immediate occasion of the infelicity of all their tribe. "The unbidden splendors of imagination," he says, "may indeed at times irradiate the gloom which inactivity produces; but such visions, though bright, are transient, and serve to cast the realities of life into deeper shade." Those who would trace the horrors of hypochondria, that symptom, or synonyme of indigestion, aggravated by indolence and intemperance, have only to peruse the letters of Burns; he will find in them the usual incongruous mixture of mirth and melancholy which generally prevails in the conversation and correspondence of dyspeptic men.

In one epistle he figures as the miserable wretch, described by Cicero, *Ipse suum cor edens hominum vestigia vitans.*" And perhaps in the next

"His bosom's lord sits lightly on his throne,
And all the day an unaccustomed spirit
Lifts him above the ground with cheerful thoughts."

Hypochondria is the malady in which extreme passions meet. The most ludicrous lines Cowper ever wrote, to use his own words, were written in the saddest mood; and but for that saddest mood, had never perhaps been written at all. Such burst of vivacity are by no means incompatible with the deepest gloom. In one of his letters, Burns thus speaks of his dejection: "I have been for some time pining under secret wretchedness; the pang of disappointment, the sting of pride, and some wandering stabs of remorse, settle on my vitals like vultures, when my attention is not called away by the claims of society, or the vagaries of the muse. Even in the hour of social mirth my gaiety is the madness of an intoxicated criminal under the hands of the executioner." In another letter he speaks of "his constitution being blasted *ab origine* with a deep incurable taint of melancholy that poisoned his existence."

To Mr. Cunningham he writes, "Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased? canst thou speak peace and rest to a soul tost on a sea of troubles, without one friendly star to guide her course, and dreading that the next surge may overwhelm her? Canst thou give to a frame tremblingly alive to the tortures of suspense, the stability and hardihood of the rock that braves the blast? If thou canst not do the least of these, why wouldst thou disturb me in my miseries with thy enquiries after me?" And to the same correspondent, about a fortnight before his death, he speaks of his sufferings in a sadder strain. "Alas! my friend, the voice

of the bard will soon be heard among you no more!—You would not know me if you saw me—pale, emaciated, and so feeble as occasionally to need help from my chair.—My spirits fled! fled!—but I can no more on the subject.” He finishes by alluding to the probable reduction in his salary, in consequence of his illness, to five and thirty pounds. He entreats his friend to move the commissioners of excise to grant the full salary. “If they do not,” he continues, “I must lay my account with an exit truly *en poete*. If I die not of disease, I must perish of hunger.”

It is needless to extract more. It has been truly said, “there is not among all the martyrologies that ever were penned so rueful a narrative as the lives of the poets.” Burns, we are told by his biographer, “though by nature of an athletic form, had in his constitution the peculiarities and the delicacies that belong to the temperament of genius. He was liable, from a very early period of life, to that interruption in the process of digestion which arises from deep and anxious thought, and which is sometimes the effect, sometimes the cause, of depression of spirits. Connected with this disorder of the stomach, there was a disposition to headache affecting more especially the temples and eye-balls, and frequently accompanied by violent and irregular movements of the heart. Endowed by nature with great sensibility of nerves, Burns was in corporeal, as well as in his mental system, liable to inordinate impressions—to fever of body as well as of mind. This predisposition to disease, which strict temperance and diet, regular exercise and sound sleep, might have subdued, habits of a very different nature strengthened and inflamed.”

In this brief observation is concentrated all the knowledge that is to be gathered from books on the subject of the literary malady, as indigestion may be pre-eminently called. There is not a word of it which demands not the most serious attention from every individual who is employed in literary pursuits; he may gather from it that excess in wine is not the only intemperance; but that excessive application to studious habits is another kind of intemperance no less injurious to the constitution than the former.

Burns wrestled with his disorder in want and wretchedness till October 1795; about which time he was seized with his last illness—a rheumatic fever. The fever, it appears, was the effect of cold caught in returning from a tavern benumbed and intoxicated. His appetite from the first attack failed him, his hands shook, and his voice trembled on any exertion or emotion. His pulse became weaker and more rapid, and pain in the larger joints, and hands, and feet, deprived him of the enjoyment of refreshing sleep. Too much dejected in his spirits, and too well aware of his real situation to entertain hopes of recovery, he was ever musing on the approaching desolation of his family, and his spirits sunk into a uniform gloom. In June he was recommended to go into the country, “and impatient of medical advice,” says his biographer, “as well as every species of control, he determined for himself to try the effects of bathing in the sea.” Burns, however, distinctly says in two of his letters, this extraordinary remedy for rheumatism was prescribed by his physician; “The medical men,” he wrote to Mr. Cunningham, “tell me that my last and only chance is bathing and country quarters, and riding.”

For the sake of the faculty, I trust that Burns was

mistaken in the matter, for no medical man of common sense could think that a patient sinking under rheumatism, and shattered in constitution, was a fit subject for so violent a remedy as the cold bath. No medical man can consider, without shuddering, the mischief it must have produced in the case of Burns. At first he imagined that the bathing was of service; the pains in his limbs were relieved, but this was immediately followed by a new attack of fever, as well might have been expected, and when he returned to his own house in Dumfries on the 18th of July he was no longer able to stand upright. At this time a tremour pervaded his frame; his tongue was parched, and his mind sunk into delirium, when not roused by conversation. On the 2d and 3d day the fever increased, and his strength diminished. On the 10th the sufferings of this great but ill-fated genius were terminated, and a life was closed in which virtue and passion had been at perpetual variance.

Thus perished Burns in his thirty-seventh year. Let those who are without follies cast the first stone at his infirmities, and thank their God they are not like the other poor children of genius, frail in health, feeble in resolution, in small matters improvident, and unfortunate in most things.*

* Strikingly speaking, perhaps, no British man has so deeply affected the thoughts and feelings of so many men, as this solitary and altogether private individual, with means apparently the humblest.—*Ed.*

CHAPTER XXII.

COWPER.

A few centuries ago, the clergy were entrusted with the care of the health of the community, either because the healing art was held in such respect, that it was derogatory to its dignity to suffer laymen to perform the high duties of so noble a profession, or because the lucrative nature of a medical monopoly was as well understood by the church in the dark ages, as it is by the college in these enlightened times. The faculty, however, flourished in the cloister, and the learned monk and the skilful leech were one and the same person. A great deal of good, and no doubt a certain quantity of evil resulted from the combination of the two vocations: of the good, it is sufficient to remember that the clergy acquired a two-fold claim to the gratitude, and also to the generosity, of the public; of the evil, we need only reflect on the extent of the influence conjoined—of the priest and the physician—to tremble at the power as well as at the result of their coalition. We know not, however, whether this evil may not have been counterbalanced, in some degree, by the advantage of the superior opportunities afforded the medical divine, of distinguishing the nature of moral maladies combined with physical, or confounded with them; and of discovering the source of those anomalies in both, which puzzle the separate consideration of the doctor, and the divine. Plato, indeed, says that

"all the diseases of the body proceed from the soul;" if such were the case, physic should prefer the service of theology to the ministry of nature. But the quaintest of authors, and at the same time most orthodox of churchmen, dissents from the opinion of the philosopher. "Surely," he says, "if the body brought an action against the soul, the soul would certainly be cast and convicted, that, by her supine negligence, had caused such inconvenience, having authority over the body." Be this as it may, Time, the oldest radical, who revolutionises all things, has remodeled the constitution of physic; the divine has ceased to be a doctor; and Taste, no less innovatory than Time, has divested the former of his cowl, and the latter of his wig: but science, it is to be hoped, has gained by the division of its labour, as well as by the change of its costume.

We had however, almost forgotten the point to which we meant our observations to apply.

Cowper's malady being connected with certain delusions on the subject of religion, the attention of serious people has been very much called to his history, and the result has been, that most of the biographical details and memoirs of him, have been written by clergymen. Hayley's "Life" is an exception, and a recent one by Taylor, which, in a religious point of view, is unexceptionable. But its fault, like that of all the others of its class, is, that while the character of Cowper is tried by all the tests that morality can apply to it, the specific malady which occasioned or influenced his hallucinations is left unnoticed; and the mystery of his religious despondency is still involved in the same obscurity in which they found it. They have looked upon his gloom as a supernatural visitation, and not a human infirmity, which was expli-

cable on any known principle of medical science. One of them has even hinted at the impiety of referring his religious gloom to any physical peculiarity. The consequence is, that Cowper's fate has not even the advantage of furnishing a salutary example of melancholy, exasperated into mania, partly by the concurrence of unpropitious circumstances, but still more by the indulgence of its victim in the errors of those "anatomists in piety who destroy all the freshness of religion by immuring themselves in the infected atmosphere of their own enthusiasm."

The object of the following observations is to point out the peculiar character of his malady, and to show how far his mental aberrations were caused or encouraged by religious enthusiasm. It will be necessary to take a brief view of his unhappy career, and to give a short transcript of those passages in his history which are wound up with the consideration of his infirmities. But previously it behoves us to be in a condition to be able to pronounce an opinion on the nature of his disorder; and for this purpose we need only refer to the summary character of the phenomena of mania. Our enquiry extends not beyond the general knowledge of the subject that is to be found in the common definitions of the disorder. In a medical point of view we have little to do with it; our business is with the character of Cowper, and not with the history of a disease.

Insanity, according to Locke, is a preternatural fervour of the imagination, not altogether destructive of the reasoning powers, but producing wrongly combined ideas, and making right deductions from wrong data: while idiocy can neither distinguish, compare, or abstract, general ideas. And "herein lies the difference between idiots and madmen—that madmen put wrong ideas to-

gether, and so make wrong propositions; while idiots make very few or no propositions, and reason scarce at all."

"Mental aberration," says Dr. Conolly, "is the impairment of one or more of the faculties of the mind, accompanied with, or inducing, a defect in the comparative faculty."

Dr. Battie's notion is more to the purpose. "Insanity," he says, "consists in the rising up in the mind of images not distinguishable by the patient from impressions on the senses." Or in the few and expressive words of Hibern, of "Ideas rendered as vivid as actual impressions."

Cullen's idea of mania is, that its leading character is a false judgment of the relations of things, producing disproportionate emotions.

Dr. Pritchard's opinion is applicable to a wider range of mental derangements. The confounding the results of memory and imagination, and mistaking the reveries of the latter for the reflections of the former; these he considers the distinguishing feature of madness.

Dr. Hawkesworth calls lunacy a condition of the mind in which ideas are conceived, that material objects do not excite; and those which are excited, do not produce corresponding impressions on the senses.

In ancient times, insanity was looked upon as a sort of transmigration of the feelings and phantasies of evil spirits into the bodies of human beings; as in the case of those demoniacs in the scripture, who wandered about naked, and roamed amongst sepulchres, making hideous noises.

The Greeks held the same opinion of its origin. Zenophon uses the word demon for frenzy; and Aristophanes calls madness kakodaimonian.

But the two definitions of this malady, which may be found to apply to the case of Cowper, are those of Locke and Mead. The former, after noticing the characteristics of general insanity, says: "A man who is very sober, and of a right way of thinking in all other things, may in one particular be as frantic as any man in Bedlam, if either by any sudden or very strong impression, or long fixing the fancy upon one sort of thoughts, incoherent ideas become cemented together so powerfully as to remain united." Dr. Mead regards madness as a particular malady of the imagination, which arises from intense and incessant application of the mind to any one object.

Such are the authorities we have thought it necessary to adduce; because a general notion of the character of mania is requisite to enable us to come to a just conclusion on the subject before us, and because it is the collective information of all we have quoted, rather than the particular opinions of any one of them, that is likely to lead us to a correct knowledge of the nature of Cowper's affliction.

But there is one thing to be considered in every inquiry into the insanity of an individual, which limits that inquiry to a very short and simple investigation of two obvious matters;—namely, what degree of eccentricity constitutes madness, and what amount of madness incapacitates the sufferer for the performance of the duties of his station, or for the management of his affairs?

CHAPTER XXIII.

COWPER CONTINUED.

We now proceed to the sad history of Cowper's mental affliction, with those sentiments of pain and even reluctance which all must feel who approach this subject, but disclaiming those feelings of false delicacy and morbid sensibility which are commonly paraded before similar inquiries.

Cowper was the son of a clergyman, of a family of some distinction; his early education appears to have been strictly religious, but it does not appear that his peculiar gentleness of disposition was duly observed and considerately treated by his father. In his sixth year he was deprived of an excellent mother, and left to the guidance of persons ill qualified for the difficult task of bringing up a youth of great delicacy of constitution, and extraordinary sensibility. Nevertheless, at the tender age of six years, this timid boy was taken from home, and placed at a public school, where he became the victim, real or imaginary, of juvenile persecution. He speaks in his letters of the tyranny of one boy in particular, as having been the terror of his existence; so much so, that he never had the courage to look him in the face all the time he was at school, such an impression did the savage treatment of this boy make upon him.

"The whole of his early life," says Stebbing, "ap-

pears to have been misdirected, by a most culpably erroneous judgment in those who had the superintendence of his education. Cowper, from his earliest youth, was a prey to ill-health, and gave signs, it is said, in infancy, of that nervous sensibility which, as his years increased, gradually assumed the character of morbid melancholy."

After remaining two years at this school, he was removed from it in consequence of an inflammation in his eyes, which he remained subject to the whole of his life at intervals. This, combined with other circumstances in his medical history—the fairness of his complexion, and lightness of his hair—render it probable that there was either a scorbutic or scrofulous taint in his constitution, which his peculiar delicacy of habit might not have allowed to develope itself externally, but which, neglected or overlooked, might have made inroads on internal textures, even on those of the brain itself. Hayley corroborates this opinion when speaking of the suddenness of the attacks of his malady. "It tends," he says, "to confirm an opinion that his mental disorder rose from a scorbutic habit, which, when his perspiration was obstructed, occasioned an unsearchable obstruction in the finer parts of his frame."

Cowper was now sent to Westminster, where he remained till his sixteenth year; all that time his timid and inoffensive spirit totally unfitting him for the hardships of a public school. On leaving Westminster he was articled to a solicitor. It would have been impossible to have chosen for him a more unsuitable profession than that of the law. At the expiration of his term he made his entry in the Temple, to qualify himself for the lucrative place of clerk to the house of lords

—which post the interest of his friends had procured for him. During his early residence in the Temple, he associated with Churchill, Colman, and other persons of literary habits, and appears to have been gay and sociable in his intercourse with them. But this mode of life, his friend, Mr. Newton, told both him and the public at a later period, in a preface to the first edition of his poems, written at the request of Cowper, “was living without God in the world,” albeit his conduct at this time appears to have been neither profligate nor depraved. It was in the Temple, however, he was seized with the first attack of his disorder; “with such a dejection of spirits,” he himself says, “as none but those who have felt the same can have the least conception of. Day and night I was upon the rack, lying down in horror, and rising up in despair. I presently lost all relish for those studies to which I had before been closely attached. The classics had no longer any charm for me; I had need of something more salutary than amusement, but I had no one to direct me where to find it.” A change of scene was now recommended to him; he accordingly proceeded to Southampton, where he spent several months; and here it was that the first shadow of insanity obscured his mind, and that the fervour of his enthusiasm on a single subject assumed the settled character of monomania. This is not the place to inquire into the nature of the malady; it is enough to know that monomania is a partial aberration of intellect, a delusion on a particular point, which has been dwelt on with such intensity that the mind magnifies its importance, till its ultimate aspect becomes distorted. The malady may continue for life without abatement, or it may disappear and return at various

intervals. As "the variable atmosphere of the mind" may be affected by alterations in the general health of the individual, and the whole course of the disease is compatible with the exercise of a sound judgment in every other matter but that particular one, which has been over-rated in importance, magnified in form, and distorted in its appearance.

This brings us to two important questions. Did Cowper labour under monomania, or did he not? And was religious enthusiasm the point on which his reason was disordered? All other questions that have been mooted, concerning the mystery of his melancholy, are comprised in these two. And it is only to their solution that we can look for a satisfactory explanation of his extraordinary gloom.

With regard to the first question, it may be borne in mind that all his biographers admit their inability to account for his dejection, and that all of them reject the supposition that religious enthusiasm had any thing to do with its production. How far their opinion of its inexplicability is a just and necessary conclusion, remains to be shown; at this stage of the subject any judgment would be premature. From facts alone can any opinion be formed, and those which are of most importance in the life of this afflicted man, the reader will now find laid before him.

He had spent some time at Southampton, apparently little improved by the change, when in one of his paroxysms of melancholy, on a particular occasion, he imagined his indifference to the duties of religion was signally, yet mercifully, rebuked by the Almighty, in an almost miraculous manner.

"We were about a mile from the town, (as he him-

self describes it) : the morning was clear and calm, the sun shone brightly on the sea, and the country on the borders of it was the most beautiful I had ever seen. We sat down upon an eminence, at that arm of the sea which runs between Southampton and the New Forest. Here it was, as if another sun had been created that instant in the heavens, on purpose to dispel sorrow and vexation of spirit. I felt the weight of my misery taken off, my heart became light and joyful in a moment ; I could have wept with transport, had I been alone ; I must needs believe the Almighty fiat, and nothing less could have filled me with such inexpressible delight, not by a gradual dawning of peace, but as it were with a flash of his life-giving countenance."

This strong impression, which obviously derives its colouring from the enthusiasm of a poetical imagination, excited by the beauty of splendid scenery and sudden sunshine, was unquestionably such a one as many individuals of devotional feelings might have experienced under similar circumstances ; but the powerful hold it took on Cowper's imagination was such, as to confound the revelation of mercy with the terrors of inexorable justice ; to make a transitory emotion of religious joy the precursor of a futurity of remorse and misery. In the reaction of enthusiasm, a feeling of unspeakable wretchedness succeeded the delightful emotion he had just described.

"Satan," he says, "and his own wicked heart, quickly persuaded him that he was indebted for his deliverance to nothing but a change of scene, and the amusing varieties of the place : and by this means had turned the blessing into a poison."

CHAPTER XXIV.

COWPER CONTINUED.

From this time his mind became distracted with religious doubts, and ultimately with remorse. He believed that he had committed "the unpardonable sin," and incurred the dreadful penalty of eternal reprobation, for neglecting to improve to his advantage the communion of his sinful spirit with the Almighty at Southampton. In every future paroxysm of his disorder throughout his whole existence, the terrific notion, that, by his conduct on this occasion, he had forfeited every claim to the promised blessings of the gospel, became the constant, undeviating theme of his madness; but strange it is that his religious friends and biographers should consider it necessary to give these first symptoms of fervid enthusiasm the pure and unimpassioned character of religion, and to ascribe the emotions of the enthusiast to the manifestations of the spirit of truth and wisdom. The fact is, that Cowper's mind was early imbued with devotional feelings; at the particular period we are speaking of, and for some years previously to it, they might have been latent in his bosom, and the forms of religion have been unattended to at that season, when its duties too often are neglected. But Cowper was the least likely man in the world, so far as we can judge from the goodness of his nature, to have wanted the grace of ultimately recurring to those habits of morality and religion, which had

been instilled into his early mind. Those who encouraged his first delusion, were greatly answerable for its melancholy consequences; but it was Cowper's misfortune to have ever been under the guidance of injudicious people, of friends exclusively serious; of people, on the whole, albeit the best and most amiable of mankind, the worst fitted to enliven the dejection, or to remove the delusion, of the melancholy poet.

In speaking of the period we are alluding to, the Rev. Mr. Stebbing says, "There is nothing in the correspondence of Cowper that should induce us to believe that either enthusiasm or melancholy had been the consequence of his deep and fervent piety." "Every thing," he continues, "that we know of the life of this amiable man, tends to convince us that no abstract opinions of any kind could reasonably be assigned as the cause of his gloom, either at the period of which we are speaking, or at any other. His melancholy, indeed, might strongly influence his religious belief, might embitter the waters of life, even as they were poured out fresh into his cup. It might make him think of God, as of man, with terror, and imagine the dark shadow of his earthly fate was thrown far as he could see over the abyss of futurity, but it could do no more; religion never clogs the veins, nor distempers the intellect; and when its revelations are made a subject of unnatural fear, it is when the sun and stars are as fraught with signs, as the scriptures with declarations of destruction."

Now this, if it means any thing, means that a state of previous excitement was necessary to the development of that disorder, which, if it did not combine the characters of enthusiasm and madness, certainly confounded the narrow limits which separate them. But divested of so-

phistry, the opinion that is meant to be established by the reverend author, and all his followers, is that Cowper's malady was neither caused nor aggravated by religious enthusiasm. But facts speak for themselves, and we appeal to them from partial views, if not from prejudiced opinions. The account of his own feelings prove them to have been those of an enthusiast. "So long," he says, "as I am pleased with an employment, I am capable of unwearied application, because my feelings are all of the intense kind; I never received a little pleasure from any thing in my life—if I am delighted it is in the extreme. The consequence of this temperament is that my attachment to my occupation seldom outlives the novelty of it. That nerve of my imagination that feels the touch of any particular amusement, twangs under the energy of the pressure with so much vehemence, that it soon becomes sensible of weariness and fatigue."

Cowper, after the death of his father, having but little fortune to inherit, found it necessary to augment his income by procuring a public appointment; accordingly the office of reading clerk in the house of lords, a place of considerable emolument, was procured for him. No sooner, however, was he fairly installed in it, than he became overpowered with terror at the necessity of making a public appearance at the bar of the house. The cause of his terror appears to have been totally inadequate to the effect produced upon him; he describes the agony of his apprehension in such extravagant terms as to render his conduct inexplicable on any other supposition but that of insanity. He threw up his appointment, and accepted the inferior one of clerk of the journals; but he had scarcely entered on the duties of his office when it occurred to him he might be subjected to a public examina-

tion, respecting his qualifications for the office, and all his former horrors and groundless apprehensions returned. The continual misery at length, he says, "brought on a nervous fever; quiet forsook me by day, and peace by night; even a finger raised against me seemed more than I could bear."

"To his disordered perception," says one of his biographers, "there appeared no possibility to escape from the horrors of his situation but by an escape from life itself. Death, which he had always shuddered at before, he began ardently to wish for now: he could see nothing before him but difficulties perfectly insurmountable, and he now meditated on the fatal expedient urged on his shattered intellect." A circumstance occurred at this time which evidently shows that he was labouring under insanity. His attention was called one day to a satirical letter in the newspaper, which he immediately imagined himself to be the subject of, although it had no reference whatever to him; he doubted not, however, but that the writer had darkly alluded to his weariness of life, his intention to end it, and had, in fact, only written the article in question, to hasten the execution of the deed he meditated. Taylor says, "that before the dreadful day approached he so greatly apprehended, he had made several attempts at the escape above alluded to; most mercifully for himself and for others, they were only attempts."

His disorder now presented so decided a character, that his friends were obliged to acquiesce in the propriety of his immediately relinquishing his situation. He was, at this period, visited by his brother, who employed every means to soothe and comfort him, but he had no success; he found him overwhelmed with despair, and tenaciously maintaining, in spite of all remonstrances to the contrary,

that he had been guilty of the unpardonable sin, in not properly improving the mercy of God towards him at Southampton. If this is not mania, religious monomania, we know not what is. It does not appear that any medical advice was had recourse to, but a learned divine was sent to him, who was to reason "his veins to health," and "with an argument new set a pulse."

Dr. Madan, we are told, had a long conference with him, in which he urged on him the necessity of a lively faith; but Cowper could only reply in these brief and melancholy words,—“most earnestly do I wish it would please God to bestow it on me.” This and subsequent interviews with the doctor, in which various religious subjects were discussed; or rather expatiated upon, appears to have been attended with still more melancholy consequences to the invalid. In the words of Taylor, “about this time he seemed to feel a stronger alienation from God than ever. He was now again the subject of the deepest mental anguish; the sorrows of death seemed to encompass him, and the pains of hell to get hold of him; his ears rang with the sound of the torments that seemed to await him; his terrified imagination presented to him many horrible visions, and led him to conceive that he heard many dreadful sounds; his heart seemed at every pulse to beat its last, his conscience scared him, the avenger of blood seemed to pursue him, and he saw no city of refuge into which he could flee: every morning he expected the earth would open and swallow him up.”

It is with no feeling of irreverence or distrust in the efficacy of religious means in moral infirmities, that we question the utility of the discussions that were forced on the attention of the dejected Cowper, at the very moment he was standing on the brink of madness, and that we

doubt if the cares of the physician of the body might not have been better adapted to the sick man's state.

After vainly endeavouring to establish a lasting tranquillity in his mind, by friendly and religious conversation, it was found necessary to remove him to St. Albans; and this removal implies that he was placed in a private lunatic asylum, under the care of the celebrated Dr. Cottle. This was in 1763, and two years afterwards we find him so much improved in health and spirits, as to be able to remove to the town of Huntingdon, where he became acquainted with the family of a clergyman, his intimacy with whom led to one of the most singular friendships on record, the most lasting, and of the purest nature. "The attachment of Cowper to Mrs. Unwin," says Hayley, "the Mary of the poet, was an attachment perhaps unparalleled; their domestic union, though not sanctioned by the common forms of life, was supported with perfect innocence." Of such a friendship it may be indeed said, "*L'amour n'est rien de si tendre, ni l'amitié de si doux.*"

CHAPTER XXV.

COWPER CONTINUED.

In a letter about this time he describes himself as perfectly recovered, and that his affliction has taught him a road to happiness which, without it, he should never have known. "How naturally," he says, "does affliction make us Christians! But it gives me some concern, though at the same time it increases my gratitude, to reflect, that a convert made in Bedlam is more likely to be a stumbling block to others, than to advance their faith."

On the evening of his arrival at Huntingdon he walked into the country, and finding his feelings powerfully affected by a sudden impulse of devotion, he knelt under a bank and prayed for a considerable time. The result was, a second impression of a miraculous manifestation of mercy, like the former at Southampton. A load of wretchedness was immediately removed from his mind, and on arising he looked upon himself as standing redeemed and regenerated in the presence of his Maker. Dr. Johnson, in speaking of the insanity of poor Smart, said to Boswell, "Madness often discovers itself by unnecessary deviations from the usual modes of the world; my poor friend Smart showed his by falling on his knees in the street and saying his prayers." The mystery of Smart's aberration is traced by Johnson to its proper source, and called by its plain name.

Cowper was now received into the house of the Rev.

Mr. Unwin, an amiable and pious family, but living in complete seclusion from the world, and mixing entirely with persons of a serious cast : a state of society, it must be allowed, ill calculated to improve the dejected spirits of one in Cowper's condition, or to lead attention exclusively devoted to a single subject, to a more general acquaintance with the pleasing pursuits of literary people. But unfortunately his new friends completely debarred him from all intercourse with men of letters, and from all concerns except those too strictly of a spiritual nature. Surely the solitude of such society must have greatly tended to increase his melancholy, by constantly entertaining one particular strain of ideas ; "the reading," as Locke says, "of but one kind of books, the falling into the hearing of but one set of opinions, and constantly conversing on but one sort of subjects." This surely was a state of things which must have eventually tended to have concentrated the clouds of insanity that had hitherto been hovering over his mental horizon.

He had hardly been two years with these good people, for such they really were, when Mr. Unwin was unfortunately killed by a fall from his horse, and Cowper was deprived of an estimable friend. The widow retired to a small cottage at Olney, and Cowper became a permanent inmate of her house. About this time he formed an intimacy with Mr. Newton, the curate of the village, which had no little influence on his future life. With great worth and goodness of disposition, there was still a spirit of austere piety in this gentleman, and even of devotional enthusiasm, which failed not to gain a powerful ascendancy over Cowper's debilitated mind. We accordingly find him deferring to the opinion of this gentleman in all matters, even those of a literary kind ; and

on his becoming an author, of committing to him the singular task of writing the preface to his poems. In that preface, the public are informed, that the poet had "been long living without God in the world, till in a memorable hour the wisdom which is from above visited his heart."

The inference that is drawn from this change in his moral condition is, that an amendment in his physical one had been signal and complete, and that health and happiness had succeeded infirmity and misery; but nothing could be more erroneous than this reasoning. His subsequent wretchedness was greater than it ever had been, "owing to some cause," says Taylor, "for which we are unable to account." Cowper's correspondence with his friends became much less frequent after his settlement at Olney than it had been formerly. Probably it might be attributed to his intimacy with Mr. Newton, for we are told they were seldom seven waking hours apart from each other.

Shortly after the death of his brother, in 1769, notwithstanding he appears to have borne the loss with considerable fortitude, he became again depressed, and Mr. Newton thought that the composition of a book of hymns was the best means he could adopt to divert his dejected thoughts. "Mr. Newton," says Taylor, "had felt the want of a volume of evangelical hymns, on experimental subjects, suited for public and private worship; he mentioned the subject to Cowper, and pressed him to undertake it. Cowper did so; but he had only composed sixty-eight of these hymns, when he was seized by an alarming indisposition—a renewed attack of his former malady." The pleasure which we derive from the perusal of these beautiful compositions (far the most ex-

quisite poetry that Cowper ever penned is to be found in some of these hymns) must be chequered with regret that so unseasonable a time should have been chosen for their composition, that he should have been occupied with so serious an employment while he was yet suffering from the first shock of his brother's death. One would have thought that literary employment of a lighter kind would have been just then better adapted for him; but Mr. Newton, neither in this, nor indeed in any other matter connected with his friend's health, appears to have acted a judicious part.

His second paroxysm of monomania occurred in 1773, and its symptoms very nearly resembled those under which he laboured at the time of his removal from London. After enduring unmitigated misery for the space of five years, his sufferings became gradually alleviated, and his reason was at length restored. During all his illness Mrs. Unwin watched over him with the kindness of a mother, and for fourteen months his friend, Mr. Newton, kept him at the vicarage, and bestowed on him indefatigable attention. In this case, as in his former illness, his biographers endeavour to prove his mania was not of a religious character. "Various causes have been assigned," says his biographer, "by different writers, for the melancholy aberration of mind to which Cowper was now, and at other seasons of his life, subject; but none are so irreconcilable to every thing like just, pure, and legitimate reasoning, as the attempt to ascribe it to religion." "His views," he continues, "so far from being visionary or enthusiastic, on the contrary were perfectly scriptural and evangelical." To this there is a plain and simple answer: if his views were not visionary or enthusiastic, their tendency unquestionably would

help to support rather than depress his mind ; but how comes it, if he had taken no visionary view of religion, that his opinion on a particular religious point was perverted, and that he believed himself doomed to eternal reprobation for an imaginary insult to religion ? This, in common parlance, is religious madness ; the term is undoubtedly a bad one, for rational views of religion can never produce insane ideas ; but erroneous notions of its tenets, and exaggerated ideas of its penalties, may produce insanity, and does so every day, as the reports of our lunatic asylum but too evidently prove. A living poet, whose advocacy of any opinion he espouses is entitled to respect, even when the energy with which it is undertaken carries him beyond the bounds of sober judgment, has likewise spurned at the idea of Cowper's malady being occasioned by religious enthusiasm, because the error on which he stumbled was in direct contradiction to his creed. The argument is plausible, but the inference is erroneous ; for even granting that his error was in direct opposition to his creed, that is yet no proof of the assertion, that religious enthusiasm did not exist.

There is a very common species of manomania which mercantile men are especially subject to—an inordinate apprehension of abject poverty without a cause. The victim of this kind of delusion may be a man of strong mind in all other matters, excepting those that concern his circumstances ; he may be possessed of considerable wealth, and it may be invested in securities which nothing short of a national bankruptcy can endanger ; yet may that man pine away in secret melancholy, under the impression that his property is in daily jeopardy, and every commercial view of his may terminate in the vista

of the poor-house ; yet the error on which he stumbles is in direct contradiction to his commercial creed, and to his former opinions.

His medical attendant might see plainly enough that excessive anxiety about a multiplicity of matters connected with his business, had harassed his mind to the extent of perverting his judgment on a single point of paramount importance. To one of the milder forms of a dyspeptic malady, Abernethy has given the term of the "city disease." *Ceteris paribus*, the term of religious mania, objectionable though it is, may be applied to Cowper's malady. But to return to the observation of the living poet we have alluded to. We find his following remarks no less inconclusive than the first, and his reasoning more characteristic of the nature of impassioned poetry, than of philosophical enquiry. "In spite," he continues, "of the self-evident impossibility of his faith affecting a sound mind with such hallucinations, though a mind previously diseased might as readily fall into that as any other ; in spite of chronology, his first aberration having taken place before he had tasted the good word of God ; in spite of geography, that calamity having befallen him in London, where he had no acquaintance with persons holding the reprobated doctrine of election and sovereign grace ; and in spite of facts utterly undeniable, that the only effectual ameliorations which he experienced under his first or subsequent attacks of depression, arose from the blessed truths of the gospel.

"In spite of all these unanswerable confutations, of the ignorant and malignant falsehoods, the enemies of Christian truth persevere in repeating that too much religion made poor Cowper mad. If they be sincere,

they are themselves under the strongest delusion, and it will be well if it prove not on their part a wilful one. It will be well if they have not reached that last perversity of human reason, that of falsehood of their own invention."

These are "words, mere words,"—strong words indeed, but not convincing ones. The invective is pointed, though not poetical, and some of the epithets are forcible, but not "familiar to ears polite." Ignorant and malignant falsehood, enemies of Christian truth, were once very good expressions to settle a difference of opinion, to confound an opponent, and stigmatise his character; but in these degenerate times dispassionate argument is made to do the violent business of abuse in literary discussions, and it is customary to encounter a literary opponent without setting up the war-whoop of infidelity at the onset of the engagement, or of using our pens as we would tomahawks, for the purpose of scalping the victim who has the temerity to differ from us in the complexion of his thoughts.

But there are assertions in the preceding observation to which the author has given the air of facts, and in the manner he has done so, there is an earnestness which is very likely to impose on many, and to render that which is plausible persuasive and convincing. Without a shadow of evidence to support his assertions, or to bear out his opinion, he jumps at the conclusion that it is a self-evident impossibility that religious enthusiasm could have affected Cowper's mind with any morbid hallucinations. The most eloquent of all modern orators has said, "Truth is to be sought only by slow and painful progress; but error is in its nature flippant and compendious: it hops with airy and fastidious levity

over proofs and arguments, and perches upon assertion, which it calls conclusion."

Had Cowper's mind been sane, no rational views of religion could unquestionably have produced the hallucination; but when his mind was clouded with hypochondria, as in early life before it had taken any definite form, nothing was wanting to convert his melancholy into monomania, and to change the wandering reveries of the former into the settled gloom of the latter, but the exclusive application of enthusiasm to a single subject.

But then chronology and geography are triumphantly appealed to, in order to invalidate this supposition; the former, forsooth, because his first aberration was previously to his having devoted himself to religious meditation. The aberration here alluded to was that which occasioned his removal to the asylum at St. Alban's; but here the author falls into the prevalent error of dating a disease from the period of having recourse to medical assistance. He has lost sight of the aberration which long before that period he laboured under the temple, when the terrors of a possible contingency, a public appearance in the house of lords, completely overwhelmed his reason, and caused him to relinquish an appointment on which all his future hopes depended. So much for the appeal to chronology; let us see if the geographical argument is better grounded. Cowper's calamity "having befallen him in London, where he had no acquaintance with persons holding the reprobated doctrines of election and sovereign grace," it is inferred that the insane notion of his perpetual exclusion from divine favour which haunted him at intervals even to the end of his life, was taken up in London when he was supposed to be little, if at all religiously disposed. We

have elsewhere said that Cowper was brought up in the very hot-bed of piety, and that early religious impressions are with difficulty ever wholly eradicated from the mind in after life, however little influence they may appear to have upon the conduct in the season of youthful levity. But the calamity, instead of befalling him in London, befell him in Southampton at the period (as he deemed) of his miraculous conversion; but while conversion was unfortunately coupled with the imaginary commission of "the unpardonable sin." Here then is geography likewise at fault: both time and place disprove the assertions they were called on to corroborate, and the simple fact remains irrefragable, that *Cowper was a man of a melancholy temperament, whose mental gloom degenerated into monomania, and that religious enthusiasm was the source of his delusions.*

And in taking leave of this painful subject, we close it with a very sensible observation of Mr. Hayley: "So wonderfully and fearfully are we made, that man perhaps in all conditions ought to pray that he may never be led to think of spiritual concerns either too little or too much, since human misery is often seen to arise equally from an utter neglect of religious duties, and from a wild extravagance of devotion."

CHAPTER XXVI.

COWPER CONTINUED.

During five years Cowper's dreadful depression continued without any abatement. During this period he was paid unremitting attention by Mrs. Unwin: but her kindness to him was, at length, repaid by a gradual improvement in his health.

Mr. Newton, at this time, was removed from the neighbourhood of Olney; before his departure, however, he triumphed over Cowper's extreme reluctance to see strangers, and succeeded in installing the Rev. Mr. Bull, a dissenting clergyman, in the acquaintance of his friend.

It is to be regretted, the first use this gentleman made of his influence over the mind of the dejected invalid, was to prevail upon him to translate a collection of spiritual songs from the religious poetry of Madame De Guyon. "If devotional excitement," says his biographer, "had been the cause of Cowper's malady, no recommendation could have been more injudicious."

Most injudicious it undoubtedly was. The French authoress in question was a complete enthusiast. Cowper himself speaks of the necessity he was under of guarding in his translation against the danger of errors, "not fearing," he says, "to represent her as dealing familiarly with God, but foolishly, irreverently, and without due attention to his majesty, of which she is somewhat guilty."

He was fortunately induced, however, to employ his

leisure in original compositions, and the result was the production of his three great poems.

From the time of his fierce attack in 1773 to his fiftieth year, his malady had the character of a mild melancholy, with occasional paroxysms of a graver nature. At the age of fifty he became an author; but no person, it is observed, ever appeared before the public in that character with less anxiety. "As to the fame, and honour, and glory," he says in one of his letters, "that may be acquired by poetical feats of any kind, God knows, that if I could lay me down in my grave, with hope at my side, or sit with this companion in a dungeon for the residue of my days, I would cheerfully waive them all."

In 1782, his friend, Lady Austin, fixed her abode in his neighbourhood, and Cowper became delighted with her society; his dejection was banished in her company, and his health and spirits evidently improved. Lady Austin was precisely the companion he so much needed, her vivacity, affability, kindness of heart, and mental accomplishments, were the qualities that were best calculated to revive the spirits and soothe the morbid sensibility of the dejected bard.

During his short intercourse with this lady, his mind was in its healthiest state, we are told by Hayley; and her sprightly and captivating conversation was often the means of rousing him from his fits of melancholy. She was accustomed to play on the harpsichord, to distract his gloomy reveries, and to engage him in the composition of songs, suited to the airs she was in the habit of playing to him. On one occasion, when she found him in low spirits, she endeavoured to enliven him by reciting the ludicrous story of 'Johnny Gilpin,' which she had heard in childhood; and next morning he informed her

that convulsions of laughter, brought on by the recollection of her story, had kept him awake during the greater part of the night, and that he had composed a poem on the subject.

At another time she solicited him to write a poem in blank verse, which he consented to undertake, if she would furnish him with a subject. "You can write upon any thing," said the lady; "why not write upon this sofa?" The command was obeyed, and the world is indebted to Lady Austin for Cowper's production of "The Task," the most pleasing perhaps of his poems. The translation of "Homer" was likewise undertaken at her suggestion, and partly at Mrs. Unwin's. Thus was he rescued from his misery for a time, by literary occupation, and the mischievous effects of his seclusion mitigated by the society of an amiable and accomplished woman.

Had he found such a companion at an earlier period how different might have been his fate! and had he enjoyed the advantage of such an acquaintance for a longer period, how much wretchedness might he have not have been spared! "The accounts," says Mr. Stebbing, "of his situation at this period afford a refreshing contrast to the details of his condition, both in the earlier and later periods of his existence. In the society of a few friends he now divided his time between the pleasures of conversation and the gentle exciting labour of composition. His mind thus gradually assumed a more cheerful cast."

How far Cowper's heart was engaged in the intimacy with Lady Austin is another matter. In his letters to his friends he speaks of her in very guarded terms; but still at times in terms of more than ordinary warmth. That the lady was not indifferent to his merits and amiability is more than probable, and that the tender interest

she took in his welfare would have warmed into a stronger attachment, and led to a permanent union, there is reason to suspect, had not the feelings and the interests of a third person been opposed to a consummation, that was most devoutly to be wished by every other friend of Cowper.

She had taken a house, adjoining the Unwins, with the intention of making it a permanent abode; but unpleasant circumstances arose which ultimately led to her removal from Olney, and to a final separation from Cowper, after an uninterrupted intercourse of two years.

The part that Mrs. Unwin took in this affair is differently represented; that she was the cause of the separation there seems to be little doubt, but whether her interference was very blameable is questionable. In common fairness it must be admitted, that the relation in which Cowper stood to this lady, (strictly decorous as their intimacy might have been,) the feelings of Mrs. Unwin were concerned in the business, and had a right to be consulted. That they were consulted by her friend is proved by the result.

Albeit, it is allowed by his biographer, that "he could not entertain the idea of parting with Lady Austin without extreme disquietude; but that immediately on perceiving that separation became necessary for the maintenance of his own peace, and to ensure the tranquillity of his faithful and long-tried friend, he wisely and firmly, (the wisdom is very doubtful,) took the necessary steps, though at the cost of much mental anguish."

His anguish, however, seems to have been of a very transitory nature, for in a few days after the separation he writes to one of his friends—"We have lost, as you say, a lively and sensible neighbour in Lady Austin; but

we have been so long accustomed to a state of retirement within one degree of solitude, and being naturally lovers of still life, we can relapse into our former duality without being unhappy in the change. To me, indeed, a third individual is unnecessary, while I can have the faithful companion I have had these twenty years."

This is certainly a frigid piece of philosophical penmanship. It exhibits a cool mode of parting with a kind friend, and somewhat of a selfish way of consoling one's self for the loss of an intimate acquaintance, which we can hardly contemplate with pleasure. But nothing throws a stronger light on the morbid state of Cowper's feelings than does this letter. The fact is, his sensibility was acute, but his individual sufferings were too great to enable him to employ it far from home. Had he the sensibility of ten poets, his own great misery was more than sufficient to occupy it all. Lear was in the right, "infirmity" truly "forgets all office," the sick man's affections are swallowed up in the sense of his own bodily afflictions, and pain protracted leads as insensibly to selfish feelings, as does old age. Cowper, more than any man, one would think, would have been affected by the loss of a bosom friend, or the death of a dear relative; yet the death of his father, we are told, preyed less on his spirits than any one could have imagined. We find him at the bed-side of his brother, performing the last duties of a Christian relative, but more in the character of a minister of religion, than of a man occupied by the feelings of fraternal solicitude. And even when the spirit of "his own Mary" is quivering on her lips, we hear of him wrapped up in his own wretchedness, inquiring if there is life still in her body; and when that life is ex-

tinct, paying one visit to the death-chamber, and never more uttering the name of his old companion.

His silence on this occasion, we are well aware, might have proceeded from the intensity of his sorrow; but it is from the general tenor of his feelings on other similar occasions, the inference is drawn, that Cowper's sensibility was barely sufficient for his own sufferings.

But even had he never laboured under hypochondria, there was a sort of catholicity in his benevolence which embraced mankind with innumerable tendrils, but there was no one branch of affection capable of clinging to a single object, of pressing it to the heart's core, and possessed of sufficient strength, even "in the grasp of death, to hold it fast."

CHAPTER XXVII.

COWPER CONTINUED.

It should be remembered by those who read the history of the errors of other men of genius by the light of Cowper's virtues, that if he had few vices he had likewise few strong passions ; or if he had the merit of subduing such passions, that seclusion and almost solitude suffered few temptations to cross his path. But it is, nevertheless, questionable whether the qualifications for a monastic institution are essential requisites or advantageous acquirements for society in any Christian country. Hayley, indeed, says that "Nature had given Cowper a warm temperament, but a disappointment of the heart, arising from the cruelty of fortune, had thrown a cloud on his juvenile spirit ; thwarted in love, the natural fire of his temperament turned impetuously into the kindred channel of devotion, and had he been successful in early love, it is probable he might have enjoyed a more uniform and happy tenor of health, but that the smothered flames of passion, uniting with the vapours of constitutional melancholy in the fervour of religious zeal, produced altogether that irregularity in the performance of the bodily and mental functions which gave such extraordinary vicissitudes of splendour and of darkness to his mortal career, and made Cowper at times an idol of the purest admiration, and at times an object of the sincerest pity." No sooner, however, was he deprived of the society of Lady Austin, than his spirits began to fail, and the loss

of her cheerful conversation was followed by a return of his former dejection. He writes to Mr. Newton at this period, "My heart resembles not the heart of a Christian, mourning and yet rejoicing; pierced with thorns, yet wreathed about with roses: I have the thorn without the rose. My brier is a wintry one; the flowers are withered, but the thorn remains. My days are spent in vanity, and it is impossible for me to spend them otherwise."—"I should rejoice that the old year is over and gone, if I had not every reason to expect a new one similar to it; but even the new year is already old in my account. I am not as yet able to boast by anticipation an acquaintance with the events of it yet unborn, but rest assured, that be they what they may, not one of them comes the messenger of good to me. If even death itself should be of the number, he is no friend of mine; for loaded as my life is with despair, I have no such comfort as would result from a probability of better things to come, were life once ended.*

The remainder of this letter puts the character of his

*Of Cowper's letters in general, we may safely assert, that we have rarely met with any similar collection, of superior interest or beauty. Though the incidents which they relate be of no public magnitude or moment, and the remarks which they contain be not uniformly profound or original, yet there is something in the sweetness and facility of the diction, and more perhaps in the glimpses they afford of a pure and benevolent mind, that diffuses a charm over the whole collection, and communicates an interest that cannot always be commanded by performances of greater dignity and pretension. Taylor's *Life of Cowper*, recently published, may be referred to with profit by all who admire the writings, and respect the character of Cowper. A good American edition of this work has been issued.—*Ed.*

mania in a clearer point of view than any other of his epistles. All the peculiarities of monomania are plainly exhibited. On one particular point his reason is clouded, his perceptions distorted, his inferences erroneous. On every other subject he thinks, talks, and acts, sanely and sensibly ; he speaks of the certainty of his eternal misery calmly and collectedly. All the "method of madness" is in his language ; in the words of Locke, he "argues rightly on a wrong principle," and endeavours to convince the clergyman to whom he writes, that the misery of his hypochondria is a mystery of divine ordination, which is physically inexplicable. It is greatly to be suspected that the mode in which this insane idea was combated by his correspondent, and by most of his religious friends, tended to fix the impression on his mind, and to produce the effect which they desired to avoid.

"You will tell me," says poor Cowper, "that the cold gloom of winter will be succeeded by a cheerful spring, and endeavour to encourage me to hope for a spiritual change resembling it, but it will be lost labour. Nature revives again, but a soul once slain lives no more. The hedge that has been apparently dead is not so : it will burst into leaf and blossom at the appointed time—but no such time is appointed for the *stake* that stands in it. It is as dead as it seems, and will prove itself no dissembler. The latter end of next month will complete a period of eleven years, in which I have spoken no other language. It is a long time for a man, whose eyes were once opened, to spend in darkness ; long enough to make despair an inveterate habit, and such it is in me. My friends, I know, suspect that I shall yet enjoy health again. They think it necessary for the existence of divine truth, that he who once had

possession of it should never finally lose it. I admit the solidity of this reasoning in every case but my own; and why not in my own? For causes, which to them it appears madness to allege, but which rest upon my mind with a weight of immoveable conviction. If I am recoverable, why am I thus?—why crippled and made useless in the church just at the time of life, when, my judgment and experience being matured, I might be most useful? Why cashiered and turned out of service, till, according to the course of years, there is not enough life left in me to make amends for the years I have lost—till there is no reasonable hope left that the fruit can ever pay the expence of the fallow? I forestall the answer,—God's ways are mysterious, and he giveth no account of his matters,—an answer that would serve my purpose as well as theirs who use it. There is a mystery in my destruction, and in time it will be explained."

Such was Cowper's melancholy frame of mind at this period; and yet immediately after the receipt of the letter we have just quoted, we find Mr. Newton soliciting him to favour the editor of the *Theological Magazine* with occasional essays, and rather reproaching him for not entering upon such subjects as may be inferred from the reply. "I converse," says poor Cowper, "as you say, upon other subjects than despair, and may therefore write upon others. Indeed, my dear friend, I am a man of very little conversation upon any subject. From that of despair I abstain as much as possible, for the sake of my company; but I will venture to say it is never out of my mind one minute in the whole day. I do not mean to say that I am never cheerful: I am often so—always indeed when my nights have been

undisturbed for a season. You will easily perceive that a mind thus occupied is but indifferently qualified for the consideration of theological matters. The most useful and the most delightful topics of that kind are to me forbidden fruit ; I tremble as I approach them. It has happened to me sometimes that I have found myself imperceptibly drawn in, and made a party to such discourse. The consequence has been dissatisfaction and self-reproach." It is difficult to conceive a more injudicious request than that of Mr. Newton. To set a man to write theological essays, who was sinking under the weight of religious despondency, was certainly not the way to alleviate his morbid enthusiasm.

In 1785 his prospects were enlivened by the expectation of a visit from his amiable relative, Lady Hesketh. From the moment Cowper heard of the intention of this lady to visit Olney, the delight he anticipated from the interview is expressed over and over in his letters, in the most joyful terms. " I shall see you again," he writes to her, " I shall hear your voice. We shall take walks together. I will show you my prospects—the hovel, the alcove, the Ouse, and its banks ; every thing that I have described." He tells her about the reception he is making for her in his green-house. " I line it," he continues, " with nets, and spread the floor with mats, and there you shall sit, with a bed of mignonette at your side, and a hedge of honeysuckles, roses, and jasmine, and I will make you a bouquet of myrtle every day. We now talk of nobody but you. And now I have nothing to do but to wish for June—and June, my cousin, never was so wished for since June was made. I shall have a thousand things to hear, and a thousand things to say, and they will all rush into my

mind together, till it will be so crowded with things impatient to be said, that for some time I shall say nothing. But no matter, sooner or later they will all come out. Confidently, and most comfortably, do I hope that, before the fifteenth of June shall present itself, we shall have seen each other. Is it not so? And will it not be one of the most extraordinary eras of my extraordinary life? Joy of heart, from whatever cause it may arise, is the best of all nervous medicines; and I should not wonder if such a turn given to my spirits should have even a lasting effect of the most advantageous kind upon them. You must not imagine, neither, that I am on the whole, in any great degree, subject to nervous affections; occasionally I am, and have been these many years, much liable to dejection, but at intervals, and sometimes for an interval of weeks, no creature would suspect it. *When I am in the best health*, my tide of animal sprightliness flows with great equality, so that I am never, at any time, exalted in proportion as I am sometimes depressed. My depression has a cause, and if that cause were to cease, I should be as cheerful, thenceforth, and perhaps for ever, as any man need be."

Who could imagine it was the same Cowper penned this cheerful letter to Lady Hesketh who had written the preceding gloomy epistle to Mr. Newton? but Cowper seems to have suited his spirits to his correspondents, not only on this but on most other occasions; and no greater proof is requisite to show what a powerful influence the habits, feelings, and dispositions of those with whom he was in communion, had upon his mind; and very little doubt can be entertained that the society of such persons as Lady Hesketh, and Lady Austin, and his later friend, Mr. Hayley, might have prevented

half the evils which his sequestered way of life, in the solitude of Olney, was the means of bringing on him.

After a separation of twenty-three years, Cowper had the pleasure of beholding Lady Hesketh, and all the delight he anticipated from the renewal of their acquaintance was realised. "My dear cousin's arrival," he writes to one of his correspondents, "as it could not fail to do, has made us happier than we ever were at Olney. Her great kindness in giving us her company, is a cordial that I shall feel the effect of, not only while she is here, but while I live."

Lady Hesketh had not long been at Olney before she became dissatisfied with the poet's residence; she thought it a situation altogether unsuitable for a person subject to depression. Cowper himself had often entertained the same opinions regarding it. He speaks of it as a place built for the purposes of incarceration, and that it had served that purpose through a long long period; that they had been prisoners there, but a jail delivery was at hand, and the bolts and bars were about to be loosed.

Lady Hesketh had taken a cottage at Weston, in a pleasant situation, and he expresses his delight at the prospect of removing to it. "Here," he says, "we have no neighbourhood—there we shall have much agreeable society. Here we have a bad air, impregnated with the fumes of marsh miasmas—there we shall breath an untainted atmosphere. Here we are confined from September to March—there we shall be on the very verge of pleasure-grounds. Both Mrs. Unwin's constitution and mine have already suffered materially by such close and long confinement, and it is high time, unless we intend to retreat into the grave, that we should seek out

a more wholesome residence. We are both, I believe, indebted for our respective maladies to an atmosphere encumbered with raw vapours, and we have, perhaps, fared the worse for sitting so often, and sometimes for several successive months, over a cellar filled with water. We have lived at Olney till mouldering walls and a tottering house warned us to depart ; we have accordingly profited by the hint, and taken up our abode at Weston.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

COWPER CONTINUED.

In this wretched house at Olney, and unwholesome situation, was poor Cowper incarcerated, as he justly terms it, for nearly twenty years. What a situation for the abode of a hypochondriac! a gloomy house, and an atmosphere tainted with malaria. Little wonder, indeed, is it if the spirits of the sensitive poet sunk under the depressing influence of both: never were the infirmities of a mind like Cowper's fastened upon him all through life, by so many circumstances unfavourable to his well-being. No sooner had Lady Hesketh convinced him of the necessity of changing his abode, than his injudicious friends endeavoured to dissuade him from removing. Mr. Newton, among the rest, his biographer informs us, on being apprised of his intended removal from Olney, expressed apprehensions that it would introduce him to company uncongenial to his taste, if not detrimental to his piety. And poor Cowper had the humiliating necessity of writing a long letter to this gentleman, in reply, to his objections, that his correspondents and companions were only his near relatives, from whom he was unlikely to catch contamination.

"Your letter," he says, "to Mrs. Unwin, concerning our conduct, and the offence taken at it in our neighbourhood, gave us both a great deal of concern; if any of our serious neighbours have been astonished, they have been so without the slightest occasion. Poor peo-

ple are never well employed when they are occupied in judging one another; but when they undertake to scan the motives of those whom Providence has raised a little above them, they are utterly out of their province and their depth. They often see us get into Lady Hesketh's carriage, and rather uncharitably suppose that it always carries us into a scene of dissipation, which in fact it never does."

The humiliating task of replying to such trivial accusations as those of Mr. Newton on this occasion, must have been irksome and annoying, even to so amiable a man as Cowper; but the futile charge, and the simple, though dignified, reply to it, are ample illustrations of the difference between a narrow and a noble mind.

In the beginning of 1787, Cowper was visited with another severe paroxysm of his mental disorder, which for more than six months suspended his translation of Homer, on which he had been for some time deeply occupied, and precluded the conversation of those with whom he was intimately associated. In his letters to his cousin he describes the first symptoms of his attack. "I have had a little nervous fever lately, that has somewhat abridged my sleep; and though I find myself better than I have been since it seized me, yet I feel my head lightish, and not in the best order for writing."

During this attack he continued shut up in the solitude of his chamber, refusing to see any human being but his kind attendant. In the autumn, however, his health and spirits were so far restored as to enable him to resume his correspondence. Speaking of his sufferings at this time, he says, "My head has been the worst part of me, and still continues so,—it is subject to giddi-

ness and pain ; maladies very unfavourable to poetical employment."

It is well worthy of observation, that in this and every other similar attack of his dreadful depression, head-ache and giddiness are spoken of as the premonitory symptoms of his disorder. But it does not appear that local depletion, or any other effective means, were ever resorted to, to obviate or prevent his sufferings, which were evidently the effects of determination of blood to the head, or probably the chronic effects of that determination—of effusion and pressure on the brain—the not unlikely source of all his miserable feelings. On one of these occasional attacks, the composition of theological essays are recommended to him ; on another, the translation of spiritual songs : on another, the production of a volume of original hymns ; but at any of these periods the service of a cupper, and the judicious care of a physician, might have proved of more advantage.

He had scarcely recovered from his late illness, before the Rev. Mr. Bull imitated the example of Mr. Newton, and importuned the unfortunate bard to compose a set of hymns for particular occasions. "Ask possibilities," replied poor Cowper, "and they shall be performed; but ask not hymns from a man suffering with despair as I do. I would not sing the Lord's song, were it to save my life, banished as I am, not to a strange land, but to a remoteness from his presence, in comparison to which, the distance from east to west is no distance, but vicinity and cohesion. I dare not, either in prose or verse, allow myself either to express a frame of mind, which I am conscious does not belong to me."

Lady Hesketh remained at Weston the greater part of two years, contributing greatly to revive the drooping

spirits of Cowper, and to encourage him to complete the vast undertaking of Homer's translation. At the approach of January, 1790, he appears to have relapsed into his dejection: he had a superstitious terror of this month, and he never could get over the idea that some dreadful calamity in this month was always impending. On the whole, however, during the time he was occupied with his Homer he adverts less frequently in his letters to his gloomy feelings than he had formerly done. He speaks to one of his correspondents, of his sufferings, only as singularities which might surprise him if he knew them. "I must say, however," he adds, "in justice to myself, that they would not lower me in your good opinion, though perhaps they might tempt you to question the soundness of my upper story."

In the beginning of 1791, he had another attack of what he calls his nervous fever, a disorder which he dreaded above all others, because it was invariably followed by a melancholy perfectly insupportable. Soon after the publication of his Homer, a literary correspondence with Mr. Hayley led to a personal acquaintance with that gentleman. He was then in his sixty-first year, and Hayley says he appeared to feel none of the infirmities of advanced life, but was active and vigorous both in mind and body. And speaking of the affectionate veneration and kindness of Mrs. Unwin for the poet, it was hardly possible, he says, to survey human nature in a more touching and a more satisfactory point of view.

In January, 1794, in that gloomy month which he always spoke of with such terror, his sad forebodings were at last realised. A severer attack of his malady than any he had yet experienced overwhelmed his spirits, and almost wholly paralysed his mental powers. His despair

became permanent, and continued unmitigated through the remainder of his life. Nothing could be now more desolate than his situation. Mrs. Unwin had been reduced to a state of second childhood by a paralytic affection, and poor Cowper shunned the sight of every other person except the individual who was incapable of rendering him any assistance. For some time he had refused food of every kind, except now and then a very small piece of toasted bread, dipped generally in water, sometimes mixed with a little wine; at length, however, he was induced to sit down to his ordinary meals, but he persisted in refusing to take even the medicines that were indispensably required, and strongly urged upon him. At this period the famous Dr. Willis was consulted by Lady Hesketh on the subject of his malady, and at the instance of Lord Thurlow this eminent physician was induced to visit the invalid at Weston, but no amelioration ensued: his disorder at the time was beyond the reach of art. He continued in the same distressing state till the summer of 1795, when change of scene and air was recommended, both for him and Mrs. Unwin, and they were accordingly conducted by his kind relative, Mr. Johnson, to a village on the Norfolk coast, and from this place they were removed to his own residence, and subsequently to a cottage within a few miles of Swaffham. These little changes were somewhat beneficial to Cowper, though his dejection continued unabated. He suffered Mr. Johnson to read to him several works of an amusing tendency, but nothing could induce him to resume his pen, not even for the revision of his favourite Homer. But a stratagem tried by Mr. Johnson to rouse his attention; he placed a volume of Wakefield's new edition of Pope's translation on a table in a room through which Cowper had to pass,

and the plan was not without success. He discovered, the next day, that Cowper had not only found those passages in which there was a comparison between Pope's translation and his own, but had corrected several of his lines at the suggestion of the critic. From this time Cowper regularly engaged in a revisal of his own version, and for some weeks produced almost sixty new lines a day. His friends began to entertain hopes of his recovery, but they were of short duration, for in a few weeks he relapsed into his former misery.

CHAPTER XXIX.

COWPER CONTINUED.

In the following December, his old and faithful companion, Mrs. Unwin, was taken from him. This most amiable and pious woman died, in the seventy-second year of her age, and was buried in Dereham Church, where a marble tablet was raised to the memory of Mary—the beloved Mary of Cowper. The day before she expired, he sat a considerable time in her apartment, and though he appeared to the attendants so absorbed in his own wretchedness as to take hardly any notice of her condition, it was evident he was aware of her approaching dissolution; for the next morning, when the servant was opening the window of his chamber, he said to her in a plaintive tone, “Sally, is there life above stairs?” He saw the dying woman for the last time about an hour before she expired. “In the dusk of the evening,” says Hayley, “he attended Mr. Johnson to survey the corpse, and after looking at it for a few moments, he started suddenly away with a vehement but unfinished sentence of passionate sorrow. He spoke of her no more.”

From the anguish he would have felt on this melancholy occasion, he was so far preserved, continues Hayley, by the marvellous state of his own disturbed health, that instead of mourning the loss of a person, in whose life he had seemed to live, all perception of that loss was mercifully taken from him, and from the moment when he hurried away from the inanimate object of his

filial attachment, he appeared to have no memory of her having existed, for he never asked a question concerning her funeral, nor even mentioned her name. Amongst other pious and learned individuals who charitably attempted, though personally unknown to him, to revive his dejected spirits, and to reason with him on the subject of the unfortunate notion which had taken possession of his mind, was the Bishop of Llandaff: he endeavoured, says his biographer, evangelically to cheer and invigorate the mind of Cowper; but the depression of that mind was the effect of bodily disease, so obstinate, that it received not the slightest relief.

By frequent change of scenery, and the incessant attentions of Mr. Johnson, he was sometimes roused to a little mental exertion—so much so as to write without sollicitation to Lady Hesketh; and though his letter is the very essence of despair, yet is it apparently the production of a mind sane on every subject but the melancholy one that overwhelmed him.

In plain language, it was the letter of a monomaniac. "You describe," he says, "delightful scenes, but you describe them to one who, even if he saw them, could receive no delight from them—who has a faint recollection, and so faint as to be like an almost forgotten dream, that once he was susceptible of pleasure from such causes. The country that you have had in prospect has always been famed for its beauties; but the wretch who can derive no gratification from a view of nature, even under the disadvantage of her most ordinary dress, will have no eyes to admire her in any. In one day, in one minute, I should rather have said, nature became an universal blank to me; yet with an effect as difficult to remove as blindness itself."

The sudden attack of his malady, as it is described in this letter, which Hayley ascribes to a scorbutic affection, is immediately attributable to sudden determination to the brain, or pressure on that organ, and certainly might be remotely ascribed to the cause which his biographer has assigned. If there be any truth in Spurzheim's theory of the separate and distinct existence of the cerebral organs, which are supposed to be the seat of the individual faculties of the mind, how much light does that theory throw on the nature of monomania, which is certainly inexplicable on any other hypothesis, and how easy is it to conceive the injury that may be done to a particular organ without involving the whole apparatus of the mind in general confusion. In what narrow limits does it circumscribe the difference between monomania and madness, between the effects of a partial and a general disorder of the mental faculties! One of the strange circumstances in cases of mental aberration which not unfrequently occurs, is an improvement in the bodily health of the sufferer, when the infirmities of the mind become permanently confirmed. Cowper's general health, at this period, was not only improved, but his bodily vigour was greater than it had been for years. In the instance of Smart, Dr. Johnson observed the same phenomenon: after visiting him in Bedlam, he speaks of his incurable insanity; but poor Smart, he says, had grown fat upon it since he had last seen him. Cowper's disorder, however, had not so entirely overpowered his faculties, but that, in the midst of his deepest melancholy, he was able to employ himself at intervals in literary pursuits. His last original production was "The Cast-away," a poem of considerable merit, but too plainly illustrative of his

own misery. "The only amusement that he appeared to have admitted, without reluctance," says Hayley, "was the reading of Mr. Johnson, who, indefatigable in the supply of such amusement, had exhausted an immense collection of novels, and at this time began reading to the poet his own works. To these he listened in silence, and heard all his pieces recited in order, till the reader arrived at the history of John Gilpin, which he begged him not to proceed with." At length, however, his strength began to break down—a complication of new maladies had set in. A dropsical appearance in his legs was observed: medical advice was now had recourse to, but it was with the greatest difficulty the sufferer could be persuaded to take the remedies that had been prescribed. His weakness rapidly increased. On the 19th of April, Mr. Johnson, apprehensive of his immediate dissolution, ventured to speak to him on the subject. He consoled, or endeavoured to console him with the prospect of an approaching eternity of peace and happiness, of the just grounds for his dependence on the merits of the Redeemer; but poor Cowper passionately entreated of him to desist from any further observations of a similar kind, clearly proving, says his biographer, that though he was on the eve of being invested with celestial light, the darkness of delusion still veiled his spirit. The three following days his debility continued to increase. The last words he uttered were addressed to his attendant, when pressed to put some refreshment to his lips—"What can it signify?" On the third of May, 1800, he calmly expired, in his sixty-ninth year, and was interred in the same church where the remains of his "Mary" were deposited.

Briefly as we have sketched the sad history of this most amiable, highly gifted, but most unhappy of the children of genius, enough has been said to render any commentary on the sufferings we have had to speak of unnecessary. We have endeavoured to divest his malady of the obscurity and mystery in which it has been involved ; we have called it by its proper name, we have referred it to its true cause, and endeavoured to point out how far his symptoms were aggravated by the counsel and conversation of injudicious people, and how far his symptoms were suffered to develop themselves and to acquire strength, by an unfortunate and perpetual concurrence of most unfavourable circumstances. The leading events in the history of his sufferings, so far as they concerned his health and consequently his happiness, may be summed up in a very few words. Cowper, from his earliest years, was delicate in constitution, and timid in his disposition. Excessive application to professional studies in the Temple increased the delicacy of his health, the nervous system and the cerebral organs became disturbed or disordered in their functions, and his natural timidity merged into a morbid sensibility which wholly disqualified him for the active duties of that profession in which he had been so improperly placed. The derangement of his health obliged him to go to the sea-coast ; he visited Southampton, and in one of his walks the unexpected spectacle of a magnificent prospect, and the sudden appearance of a burst of sunshine in all the "uncertain glories of an April day," overpowered his imagination, and filled his heart with a rapture of devotional enthusiasm. The splendour of the scene was taken for the effulgence of the Deity, and the wrapt spectator believed that the vision was expressly intended for a merciful

warning to lead him to the remembrance of that Being, whom, in his friend's words, he had been living without in the world. He returned to town, the momentary excitement passed away, and the warning was forgotten—a public appointment was procured for him, but the terror of a public appearance at the bar of the house of lords completely overwhelmed him, and he was obliged to renounce his employment. His nervous disorder returned with increased strength; he became the victim of hypochondria, and his friends deemed it necessary to place him under the care of Dr. Cottin. During the time that he remained in this private asylum, his condition appears to have been similar to that of Dr. Johnson in his early life, his dejection as severe, but certainly not more so, and no indication, even in his worst moments, of general insanity. His improvement in health and spirits at length led to his removal to a country village, and here he became domiciled in the family of a clergyman, in which he continued for the remainder of his life. The character of the society into which he was thrown was exclusively serious, or what is called evangelical. The story of the miraculous vision at Southampton was told to his friends, and the importance which was attached, and the credit that was given to it, fixed the impression stronger than ever on his mind, that it was a divine warning, and that he had neglected it.

Repentance, indeed, ensued, and remorse followed so closely upon it, that the latter took possession of all the faculties of his mind, and permanently, though partially disordered it. The dreadful idea became fixed, that in rejecting that warning he had committed the unpardonable sin, and that there was no hope for him here or hereafter. This was the commencement of his mono-

mania : the disorder of his nervous system which had previously been only the derangement of the functions of that system, now probably proceeded to the disease of the organ itself, and all the after circumstances of his life and the tenor of his conversation with those around him, with few exceptions, were unfortunately calculated to fix the idea which preponderated in his mind over every other thought. That, under happier circumstances, and with due attention to the digestive organs, Cowper might have been rescued from the misery he endured through life, there is every reason to believe, and that, like Johnson, he might have acquired the power of "managing his mind," and even of "mastering its ailments" to a great extent. But all through his disorder, the digestive organs were impaired and neglected; to use the words of his biographer, "the process of digestion never passed regularly in his frame during the years he resided in Norfolk!"—and this little paragraph is the essence of the "history and mystery" of Cowper's malady. This was indeed the true source of his hypochondria; and to whatever gulf the torrent of his dejection might have flowed, whether of insanity or eccentricity, religious enthusiasm was but the tributary stream which found a ready channel to receive its troubled waters. The original current might indeed have swelled with their increase, till the banks of reason were broken down by its aggravated fury, but the source of the mischief must be traced to the fountain-head, not to the feeble stream that fed its violence.

CHAPTER XXX.

BYRON.

That tax of censure which is laid on the eminence of genius, has been pretty rigidly enforced in all ages, and in all countries ; but of late years it has fallen more heavily than usual on literary men. The privilege of levying this odious impost on private habits, for the public entertainment, has become a vested right ; and no man's memory is entitled to immortality till his character has been duly cudgelled, to extract the last particle of earthly dross, in order to qualify it, by this purgatorial process, for its future happiness ; so that, even in these times, there is a species of killing which is no murder, and of taxation which is no tyranny. Whatever Lord Milton may think on the subject of other taxes, there is no withholding of this particular one on eminence—there is no stopping the public supplies of scandal, for there are no other means of satisfying the public creditor—curiosity. But, if ever there was a man's memory entitled to a discharge in full of all demands upon his character, that man's memory is Lord Byron's.

Eight years have hardly elapsed since his death, and year after year, with unprecedented avidity, the public have swallowed lives, last days, recollections, conversations, notices, and journals, professing to delineate his character ; and the last effort of biography commands as much attention as the first. And yet, with all the lights

those various volumes have shed upon his peculiarities, how is it that, with many, his character still remains a problem? No man's errors were ever more closely observed by his best friends, nor more carefully recorded by his worst enemies. No man's vices were ever less effectually palliated by the partiality of his biographers, nor his virtues, except in a single instance, more cautiously admitted by his *soi-disant* admirers. The fact is, Byron had few, if any friends, amongst his intimate acquaintances. It is only in domestic life that kindness of heart redeems unevenness of temper; but in literary friendship there is no love superior to the caprice of a sullen disposition, or the sallies of a satirical one. The greatest defect in Byron's character was a propensity to ridicule his absent friends; a biting jest was never lost, at any expense of violated friendship. Poor Parry's "love of brandy," Moore's "love of lords," Leigh Hunt's "*rimini piminis*," and even Galt, "the last person in the world on whom any one would commit literary larceny," are specimens of the raillery which abound in his letters; and there are few, if any, of the friends who have become his biographers, who did not suffer from it. The easy and natural absurdity which he had the power of throwing over the subjects of his ridicule, is apparently free from any malevolent design; but who can doubt that the subjects of the best humoured raillery are not pained by its infliction, and however they may affect to laugh at the annoyance, that they are not secretly chagrined, and that their affections are not insensibly estranged by such ridicule? It would be too much to suppose that Byron's conduct to his friends excited no soreness of feeling in his biographers, however incapable they might be of magnifying his errors. However desirous they might

be to exaggerate nothing, or set down aught in malice, it is greatly to be suspected that the remembrance of these injuries had much to do with the recollection of his frailties, and that the latter would never have been so prominently set before the public eye, had their memories not been refreshed by their offended feelings. Byron might well say to Lady Blessington, when deploring the loss of some early friends, "But perhaps it is as well that they are gone; it is less bitter to mourn their death than to have to regret their alienation, and who knows that had they lived they might have become as faithless as those that I have known? Experience has taught me that the only friends we can call our own, who can know no change, are those over whom the grave has closed—the seal of death is the only seal of friendship." With such sad experience he might well anticipate the fate his memory had to suffer; for, like Pope, he had reason to apprehend the common fortune of extraordinary geniuses, "to be more admired by their friends than to be loved." This observation is, however, by no means applicable to the feelings of Moore for his noble friend. He seems to have set about the life of Byron with no other motive but a sincere desire to do justice to his memory; yet it is a matter of doubt, whether the character of the latter has suffered more from the open uncompromising hostility of Hunt, or from the fatal candour and the unsuccessful palliation of Moore. Few, we believe, rise from the perusal of the former gentleman's volume with a changed opinion of Byron's kind-hearted disposition; but very many, we believe, carry away a fixed impression from the work of the latter, of the inordinate vanity and egotism of the victim of the poetic temperament. Public opinion may be erroneous and prejudiced for a season,

but ultimately the power of truth is certain to prevail over all its mistaken views of things and persons, and "even-handed justice is sure to commend the ingredients of the poisoned cup" of criticism back to its own envenomed lips. But there is more danger of prejudice taking root when the sincerity of the effort to remove it is beyond suspicion. The fidelity of More, as a biographer, and his affection for Lord Byron, no one questions; and therefore, any failure in the palliation of the errors he so minutely details, is attributed rather to the difficulty of the task, than to the injudiciousness of the mode of undertaking it. Byron may have been all that which Moore represents him to have been, (not indeed in so many specific words, but in the inference he has left his readers to draw from the documents he has set before them,)—inconstant, vain, irascible, sarcastic, and dissolute, altogether an indifferent man, and a very aristocratic lord; but surely "the poetic temperament" is no sufficient shield to fling before the face of so many large defects; or, if there be any advantage in it as a protection to error against the censure of its assailants, the name at all events is an absurdity, for the "poetic temperament" means nothing more than a peculiar constitutional state, arising from a predominant passion for poetry, and implying certain evils peculiar to the cultivation of that particular art. But the evils in question are not peculiar to any branch of literary pursuits; they belong not exclusively to poetry, but to every species of intellectual labour, too long continued, or too intensely followed, and the result is a state of morbid sensibility, arising from bodily disease. but in the biography of Byron, the origin of his morbid sensibility is referred not to its true cause; we are simply told that his tempera-

ment was a poetic one, and that it was unfavourable to the due performance of his social and domestic duties. It is, however, only by tracing either physical or moral phenomena to their remotest origins, that any intelligible idea can be formed of them. Moore has indeed recorded, and seems to have delighted in recording, every thing that was good in Byron's character; but has he not given an immortality to his frailties which no other person had the means of giving them? Has he not made the anatomy of his melancholy a public demonstration of trivial errors—a minute dissection of all those infirmities which no one but a friend could have been familiar with? "He best can paint them who has felt the most."

The public had a right to expect such a general outline of his private history as might illustrate his character, and manifest its influence on his writings; but if literary curiosity demanded more, it deserved not the gratification of its morbid appetite. A fondness for literary gossip has grown up of late years; biographers must cater for it, and in their calling they may imagine they are honestly contributing to the public entertainment when they are pandering to its sickly taste. It is surprising how the moral public may suffer the severity of its decorum to be softened down by a delicate detail even of outrages on delicacy itself. Names, it is said, are not things, but it is a foolish saying; a liaison of Byron with an Italian countess is a very different thing from the profligacy of an actor, with the lady of an alderman; and may be illustrated by letters of no common tenderness, and yet be read without any impropriety.

The amours of Lord Byron, in royal quarto, are indeed very different from the exploits of Don Juan in duode-

cimo, and splendid sins are equally distinct from low-lived errors. Far be it from us to quarrel with the tolerating spirit of society; but the errors of Lord Byron, however they may be designated, and however diligently collected and recorded, are not likely to receive any general immunity from public charity, perhaps at least for half a century to come.

CHAPTER XXXI.

BYRON CONTINUED.

The biographer of a man like Byron is often little aware of the difficulty of the task he undertakes. It is one of the common eccentricities of genius to mystify its character for the capricious pleasure of bewildering the observation of those who are most familiar with its privacy. "It cannot be denied," says Galt, "that there was an innate predilection in the mind of Lord Byron to mystify every thing about himself." If such was the case, how difficult was it for those who imagined themselves in his confidence to form a just opinion of his character, and how likely was the superficial observer to estimate his sentiments by his mode of conversing on any subject that he was wont to play with! If a literary man of celebrity converses without any restraint or affectation of singularity, even with his intimate acquaintances, he is fearful of endangering his confidence and diminishing the respect of his private circle. If Johnson had not been in the habit of perplexing Boswell by the paradoxical opinions he so gravely and sententiously maintained, the veneration of the latter might have declined in a ratio with the facility of comprehending the oracles of his idol.

Burns, long before intemperance disordered his sensibility, was accustomed to astonish his correspondents at the expense of his character, by affecting remorse for imaginary errors, and by magnifying common cares into overwhelming troubles.

Pope, we are told by Johnson, in the prime of life courted notoriety, by playing the fictitious part of a misanthrope before it became him: and even Swift was constrained to tell him he had not yet suffered or acted enough in the world to become weary of it.

"The melancholy Cowley" had a similar propensity for visionary persecutions, and imaginary amours. "No man," says his biographer, "need squander his life in voluntary dreams or fictitious occurrences; the man that sits down to suppose himself charged with treason or speculation, and beats his mind to an elaborate purgation of his character from crimes which he was never within the possibility of committing, differs only in the unfrequency of his folly, from him who praises beauty which he never saw, and complains of jealousy which he never felt."

Byron, in his early eagerness for notoriety, affected singularity so strongly, that by dint of deceiving others he actually became the dupe of his own delusions. Day after day he alludes in his journal to the recurrence of a dream, whose horrors would seem to be the fitting companions of the terrors of a murderer. "I awoke from a dream—well, have not others dreamed? Such a dream—but she did not overtake me! I wish the dead would rest for ever. Ugh! how my blood chilled—I do not like this dream! I hate its foregone conclusion!"

In another page:—"No dreams last night of the dead or the living. So I am 'firm as the marble founded on the rock, till the next earthquake.'"

Elsewhere, speaking of the "Bride of Abydos," he says, "It was written in four days to distract my dreams from * * * *; were it not thus it had never been com-

posed : and had I not done something at the time, I must have gone mad by eating my own heart—bitter diet.”

In another place, speaking of the most tragical of his poems,—“Had it not been for Murray it would never have been published, though the circumstances which are the groundwork of it—heigh ho !”

Alluding to his state of mind at this period, he says, “My ostensible temper is certainly improved, but I must shudder, and must to my latest hour regret the consequences of it, and my passions combined. One event—but no matter ; there are others not much better to think of also—to them I give the preference. But I hate dwelling upon incidents ; my temper is now under management, rarely loud, and when loud, never deadly.”

Even at seventeen the rage for fictitious misery was upon him.

“Oh memory, torture me no more,
The present's all o'ercast ;
My hopes of future bliss are o'er,
In mercy veil the past.”

Such are the lines of a boy at seventeen.

In Stendhal's account of Byron in the “Foreign Literary Gazette,” in speaking of the poet's fictitious remorse, he asks, “Is it possible that Byron might have had some guilty stain upon his conscience, similar to that which wrecked Othello's fame ? Can it be, have we sometimes exclaimed, that in a frenzy of pride or jealousy he had shortened the days of some fair Grecian slave faithless to her vows ? Be this as it may, (he adds,) a great man once known, may be said to have opened an account with posterity?—Such questions can no longer be injurious but to them who have given them birth. After all, is it

not possible that his conscience might have only exaggerated some youthful error?

The just and charitable conclusion of the foreigner will be admitted by most people; some there may be who have a character for malignant consistency to preserve, and may therefore withhold that charity from the memory which they denied to the living man. It may not be wondered at if those who have exhausted a world of common crimes should now "imagine new," or still invest the character of Byron with every sombre hue which he gave to his own heroes.

The recklessness, however, of his capricious nature furnished his enemies with this weapon against himself, in seeking to impersonate his own errors, or the crimes which others attributed to him, and affecting to stand before the world in all the dark Murillo-tints of his own fancy—

"Himself the dark original he drew."

This weakness of endeavouring to appear to others worse than we really are, is a species of simulation, first practised for its singularity, but which ultimately becomes so fixed a habit as almost to border on insanity. Poets and religious enthusiasts are peculiarly prone to this apparent self-abasement; the fervid zeal of Cowper, the inspiration of Byron, tended to the same excitement of imagination, the same exaggerated views of their own errors. The fanatic feels a spiritual pride in humiliating humanity and himself, before an admiring multitude; the poet recreates his fancy in bewildering the world with the marvellous anamolies in his character. But even while he affects to immolate his vanity, self is ever the

god of his idolatry; and whatever obloquy he may pretend to cast upon the idol, he still abjures it "with a certain loving respect," and even in his anxiety to be thought sincere, though he fling the censer at the head of the effigy he repudiates, it is only in order that the incense may ascend the higher. In a word, Byron's nature had no more to do with the misanthropy his gloomy mind delighted to depict, than Milton's humanity had to do with the malignity of the devils which it was the solace of his leisure so sublimely to describe. We doubt if the personal dispositions of an author are much more discernible in the productions of his imagination, than the qualities of an actor are discoverable in the characters he assumes.

"Is the moralist," says D'Israeli, "a moral man? Is he malignant who publishes satires? Is he a libertine who composes loose poems? And is he, whose imagination delights in terrors and in blood, the very monster he paints?" A reference to the dissimilar character of men and authors, furnishes a reply to each question. "La Fontaine," he tells us, "wrote tales fertile in intrigues, yet has not left a single amour on record. Many of Smollet's descriptions were not only prurient but indelicate, yet his character was immaculate. Cowley loved to boast of the variety of his mistresses, but wanted the courage to address one." A living poet has left Catullus in the shade, and yet proved the most constant of husbands; and yet, on the other hand, behold "Seneca, an usurer of seven millions, writing on moderate desires. Sallust declaiming against the licentiousness of his age, yet accused in the senate of habitual debaucheries. Demosthenes, recommending the virtues of his ancestors, yet incapable, says Plutarch, of imitating them. Sir

Thomas Moore preaching toleration, yet in practice a fierce persecutor. Young constantly condemning preferment, and yet all his life pining after it, the most sombrous of poets, yet a most trivial punster." For the vagaries of the tragic and comic muse, we have but to glance at Rowe, stalking solemnly in sock and buskin, and yet, according to Spence, laughing all day long, and doing nothing else but laugh. And Moliere, the first of comedians, setting the theatre in a roar, yet decorous, even to gravity, in private life. These instances may serve to throw a little light on the dissimilar character of the author, as he presents himself before us in his literary robe, and the private individual in the every-day dress of common life. And they may also serve to show the fictitious nature of Byron's misanthropic self-drawn character.

CHAPTER XXXII.

BYRON CONTINUED.

It now remains to show how far the character of Byron was influenced by disease, and what the nature of that disease was. That he laboured under a specific malady, which gravely affected the mental faculties, and influenced, if it did not determine, his conduct on very many occasions, is a fact as obvious as his defects; yet, strange to say, the existence of such a malady is very little known, and has never been distinctly pointed out. His symptoms have indeed been noticed under various names, when productive of any extraordinary and palpable effect, but they have been so indefinitely described, that nothing but medical investigation is competent to a solution of the difficulties they present. In one place we read of his being subject to an hysterical affection, in another of his being carried out of a theatre in a convulsive swoon; elsewhere, of an apoplectic tendency, attended with temporary deprivation of sense and motion; at another time, of nervous twitches of the features, and the limbs following any emotion of anger, and from trivial excitement, and slight indisposition, of temporary aberrations of intellect, and delirium; but no where do we find the cause of these phenomena plainly and intelligibly pointed out, nor the real name given to his disorder, till his last and fatal attack. The simple fact is, he laboured under an epileptic diathesis, and on several occasions of mental

emotion, even in his early years, he had slight attacks of this disease. If feelings of delicacy induced his biographers to conceal a truth they were aware of, or deemed it better to withhold, their motive was unquestionably a good one; but it was nevertheless a mistaken delicacy; for there are no infirmities so humiliating to humanity as those irregularities of conduct in eminent individuals; and the only palliation they admit of is often precluded by our ignorance of the bodily disorders under which they may have laboured.

Epilepsy (so called from the suddenness of its seizure) was termed by the ancients "the sacred disease," "from its affecting the noblest part of the rational creature." Aretæus says, because it was imagined, that some demon had entered into the man; and this is the doctrine and the prevailing opinion of the vulgar, in many countries, even to the present day. This disorder is sometimes symptomatic of irritation in some other part of the body: more especially in the stomach, inducing a temporary plethoric state of the bloodvessels of the head, and by pressure on that organ producing sudden deprivation of sense, attended with convulsions.

It is called idiopathic when regarded as a primary disease arising from some specific injury to the brain, caused by some internal irritation, a spicula of bone, a tumor, or effusion, the consequence of which is, a recurrence of the paroxysms at certain intervals. In both forms the presence of convulsions is the circumstance which distinguishes epilepsy from apoplexy—and this merits attention, for both maladies in their milder shapes, are frequently confounded: (this was the case in Byron's instance, more than once.)

The symptomatic form of epilepsy was that which

Byron most probably laboured under : it is often hereditary, and the predisposition to it renders the two extremes of a plethoric and a debilitated habit equally productive of its attacks. There is much reason to suspect that Byron's was an hereditary taint, and was derived from his unhappy-tempered mother. An epileptic tendency is very frequently associated with partial mania. Dr. Mead says, that "after an epilepsy often comes on madness of a long standing, *for these diseases are very nearly related.*" Little is known of the early history of Mrs. Byron, but quite enough of the extraordinary violence of her temper, and its effects upon her health after any sudden explosion of choler, to warrant the belief that some cerebral disease occasioned that degree of excitability which is quite unparalleled in the history of any lady of sane mind.

With such a temperament, if we hear of her falling into fits after the occurrence of any violent emotion, although nothing of their nature may be told, there is great cause to suspect that an epileptic diathesis might have tended to their production.

On one occasion we are told by Moore, that at the Edinburgh theatre she was so affected by the performance, that she fell into violent fits, and was carried out of the theatre screaming loudly. At all events, whether Byron's epileptic diathesis was hereditary or not, the question of its existence is beyond dispute; he had no regular recurrence of its paroxysms like those that belong to a confirmed case of the primary form of this disease; his seizures were generally slight, occasioned by mental emotion or constitutional debility, induced by the alternate extremes of intemperance and abstemiousness. In boyhood, the most trivial accident was capable of pro-

ducing sudden deprivation of sense and motion. On one occasion, a cut on the head produced what he calls a "downright swoon;" a similar effect was the consequence of a tumble in the snow at another time. In later life, the same constitutional tendency is to be observed. One evening, on the lake of Geneva with Mr. Hobhouse, an oar striking his shin caused another of those "downright swoons:" he calls the sensation "a very odd one, a sort of gray giddiness first, then nothingness and total loss of memory." At Bologna, in 1819, he describes one of his attacks in one of his letters in these terms: "Last night I went to the representation of Alfieri's *Mirra*, the last two acts of which threw me into convulsions; I do not mean by that word a lady's hysterics, but an agony of reluctant tears, and the choking shudder which I do not often undergo for fiction." This attack appears to have been of a graver nature than the description of it implies, for a fortnight after we find him complaining of its effects. He was seized with a similar fit at witnessing Kean in *Sir Giles Overreach*, and was carried out of the theatre in strong convulsions. At Ravenna, in 1821, on some occasion of annoyance, he says he flew into a paroxysm of rage which had all but caused him to faint. And the same year, complaining of the effects of indigestion, he says, "I remarked in my illness a complete inaction and destruction of my chief mental faculties; I tried to rouse them, but could not—and this is the soul. I should believe that it was married to the body, if they did not sympathise so much with each other."

Ellis, the American artist, alludes to a convulsive and tremulous manner of drawing in a long breath as one of his peculiarities; and we are informed by Lady Blessing-

ton, whose accurate observation of Byron's character we have reason to place great dependence upon, that any casual annoyance gave not only his face, but his whole frame, a convulsive epileptic character. In 1823, in speaking of an indisposition of his daughter, caused by a determination of blood to the head, he told Dr. Kennedy it was a complaint to which he himself was subject; and Moore justly observes, that there was in Byron's state of health at that time, the seeds of the disorder of which he afterwards died. The details of the last attack of epilepsy which preceded his dissolution are more minutely described than any former illness. "He was sitting," says Galt, "in Colonel Stanhope's room, talking jestingly with Captain Parry, according to his wonted manner, when his eyes and forehead discovered that he was agitated by strong feelings, and on a sudden he complained of weakness in one of his legs, then rose, but finding himself unable to walk, he called for aid, and immediately fell into a violent convulsion, and was placed on a bed. While the fit lasted, his face was hideously distorted, but in a few minutes the convulsion ceased, and he began to recover his senses; his speech returned, and he soon rose apparently well. During this struggle his strength was preternaturally augmented, and when it was over, he behaved with his usual firmness." This was on the 19th of February and on the 19th of April he was a corpse.

Here are all the symptoms of epilepsy regularly detailed; the nature of the attack is not to be mistaken, and it leaves the character of the preceding ones, however slightly manifested, in little doubt. It has been already stated that the seat of this disorder is in the brain, while

the source of the excitement which leads to it is frequently in the stomach. The injury done to the latter by violent transitions from intemperate habits to rigid abstemiousness, by an ill-judged regimen and excessive mental exertion, could not fail to call into activity the dormant malady to which he was predisposed, and when so eliminated to aggravate its symptoms.

CHAPTER XXXII.

BYRON CONTINUED.

Of all these symptoms, the earliest, the most constant, and yet, generally, the most misunderstood, is melancholy. This is not the place to treat of its anatomy; every one who has lived *sibi et musis*, whose days for any length of time have been spent in study, whose vigils have been devoted to books, sooner or later must be acquainted with it. There is something in literature of a sacred, yet sombre character, which diffuses a pleasing melancholy over the mind, so insensibly progressive, that one is scarcely aware of its effects before he becomes its victim. If a predisposition to any cerebral disease is latent in his constitution, how insidiously his spirits are undermined, and how surely does melancholy degenerate into the morbid sensibility of confirmed hypochondria! For such a man society has no charms; he makes a merit of his aversion from social intercourse, he prides himself on being independent of the frivolous amusements of the world. His self-concentration causes him to think his mind is all-sufficient for his individual felicity, and a refined selfishness becomes the most prominent feature of his isolated feelings. He persuades himself, like Thomson, that "a serene melancholy is the most noble and the most agreeable situation of the mind." It is in vain to argue with him on the danger of indulging this depressing passion. He will tell you perhaps, in the language of Rogers,

" You may call it madness, folly ;
You cannot chase my gloom away ;
There's such a charm in melancholy,
I would not, if I could, be gay."

Of all writers, old Burton has given the most graphic description of this "*amabilis insania*," as he is pleased to call it. "Melancholy," says our quaint author, "is that irrevocable gulf to which voluntary solitariness gently leads us, like a syren ; it is most pleasant at first, to those who are given to this passion, to keep their chamber, or to walk alone in some secluded grove, meditating upon whatever may affect them most. *Amabilis insania*, a most incomparable delight is it to such persons so to melancholise and build castles in the air, and go smiling to themselves, acting an infinite variety of parts, which they strongly imagine represented in reality. In such fantastical meditations, and ever-musing melancholising, they are carried along like one that is led—like a Puck about a heath. They run on indulging their humours, until at last the scene is turned upon a sudden ; they can endure no company, they can ruminate only on distasteful subjects. Fear, sorrow, and weariness of life, surprise them at last—they can think of nothing else ; no sooner are their eyes open than this infernal plague of melancholy seizes on them, and terrifies their souls, representing some dismal object, which by no persuasion can they avoid—the arrow sticks in their flesh, they cannot get rid of it." In no very gentle terms he goes on deprecating the indulgence of literary men in seclusion and loneliness—"væ soli !" He continues, "Wo be to him that is long alone ! As the saying is, '*homo solus aut deus, aut demon*.' These wretched creatures dege-

nerate from social beings, into moody misanthropes; they do even loathe themselves, and hate the company of others; and we may say to them, as Mercurialis said to his melancholy patient, 'Nature may justly complain of thee, that, whereas she gave thee a wholesome temperament, and a sound body, and, above all, the noble gift of a reasonable soul, thou hast perverted those gifts by solitariness, by idleness, and excess; thou art a traitor to God and nature, and thou thyself art the efficient cause of thine own misery.' " This was rather harsh language for a doctor to hold to his melancholy patient, or for Burton to apply to his fellow-sufferers, for he acknowledges himself to have been a victim to melancholy; and, indeed, it was impossible to have made the acquisition of his wonderful erudition without the sacrifice of his health and spirits. In the succeeding chapter, however, he somewhat mitigates the severity of his censure, and admits that these melancholy feelings are often born and bred with us by habit, and that we often have them from our parents by inheritance; but religion, education, and philosophy, can mitigate and restrain them "in some few men at some times," but for the most part that they overwhelm reason, and bear down all before them, like a torrent; and that their disorder oftentimes degenerates into epilepsy, apoplexy, convulsions, or blindness, if once it possess the ventricles of the brain.

Byron's temperament resembled that of the great majority of the *genus irritabilium*. But, whether it was that he took too much pleasure in parading his melancholy before the public eye, or that public attention was more directed to it than it ever had been to the infirmities of any of his predecessors, from the greater interest he excited by his superior genius, certain it is that his

mental gloom was more observed and less charitably considered than it ought to have been. There was indeed nothing extraordinary in its nature but its intensity, and nothing more of malignity in its character than is to be found in the dejection of thousands of other literary men of similar habits. The only wonder is, that it should ever have grown into such importance, even under the magnifying lens of public observation.

Byron was "the observed of all observers," and it was the wayward pleasure of his misery to expose it unnecessarily to the public gaze. It is impossible to peruse his biography without carrying away a conviction of his egotism; and the reason is, that no man's privacy would bear the scrutiny which his had been so minutely subjected to. The self-esteem of authors is proverbial; even mediocre talents are seldom without vanity; but there never was a great poet who was not an egotist. Tully said to Atticus "that a true poet never thought any other better than himself. Ovid and Horace afford specimens of this sort of self-complacency, "*exegi monumentum æri perennius.*" *Jamque opus exegi quod nec Jovis ira,*" &c. But, we need not travel out of our own times for instances of this besetting sin of vain-glory: among the best and most amiable of our bards there probably exists but one splendid and solitary exception to the rule,—a man of genius without passions, and consequently without vices, without fervid enthusiasm, the calm and even current of whose life for half a century had hardly an impediment to its tranquillity. But this was not the lot of Byron—the child of passion—born in bitterness,

" And nurtured in convulsion,

all the elements of domestic discord were let loose upon his youth—a home without a tie to bind his affections to its hearth—a mother disqualified, by the frenzied violence of her temper, for the offices of a parent; and if he would escape from the recollection of that violence, no father's fondness to fall back upon, and no virtue coupled with his memory to make its contemplation a pleasure to his child, for he

“Had spoiled his goodly lands to gild his waste,
Nor calm domestic peace had ever deigned to taste.”

It is difficult to conceive more unfavourable circumstances for the development of a mind like Byron's; the only wonder is, that any of the noble qualities of his nature escaped perversion. These circumstances are alluded to with exquisite pathos in *Childe Harold*,

“I have thought
Too long and darkly, till my brain became
In its own eddy boiling and o'erwrought,
A whirling gulf of phantasy and flame,
And thus untaught in youth my heart to tame,
My springs of life were poisoned.”

Many, however, imagined that Byron's melancholy was purely fictitious, and that the poet put on the vesture and garb of woe, as poor Maturin, after the battle of Waterloo, would one day put his arm in a sling, and another day wrap a silk handkerchief round his knee, and parade the town, to excite the sympathies of the gentle passengers. But it was not the “windy suspiration of forced breath, nor the dejected 'haviour of his visage,” that constituted his gloom. His misanthropy, at all events, was only in his pen, but his melancholy was in his heart.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

BYRON CONTINUED.

The intensity of Byron's hostility to a fellow-creature, on any occasion, could never have entitled him to the love of our great moralist—he was a bad hater! So genuine was his gloom, that Burton himself might have revelled in its anatomy, for it was the very epitome of melancholy. The first time Moore saw him, he was struck with the spiritual paleness of his features, and the habitual melancholy of their expression. To ordinary observers there is nothing more inexplicable than the mirth of melancholy; the good people of Abdera would have it that Democritus was merry even to madness, because in the bitterness of his heart he could not choose but laugh at the follies of his time; but Hippocrates told them that they were fools, for the man was neither mad nor mirthful. Goethe's "capricious temper," to use his own words, "was ever fluctuating between the extremes of sadness and petulance;" Byron's capricious humour was ever alternating between the extremes of excitement and exhaustion.

"Though I feel tolerably miserable," he says, in his journal, "yet am I subject to a kind of hysterical merriment, which I can neither account for nor control; and yet I am not relieved by it, but an indifferent person would think me in excellent spirits."

On one occasion, we hear of his asking Lady Byron, with an attempt at light-heartedness, if he was not after

all a very good-humoured man, and of the damper to his spirits in the shape of a reply ; " No, Byron, you are the most melancholy man I ever knew."

Wilkie has taken subjects less ludicrously pathetic for his pictures, than the melancholy poet attempting to be jocose, and enquiring of his wife, if he is not mirthful ; and the lady with a rueful countenance, in the serious act of expressing her dissent.

In one of his letters to Moore, he says, he feels as Curran said he felt before his death, a mountain of lead upon his heart ; and when Moore rallies him for his dejection, and tells him he could not have written the " Vision of Judgment" under the depression of much melancholy, " There," replied Byron, " you are mistaken ; a man's poetry is a distinct faculty or soul, and has no more to do with the every-day individual than the inspiration of the Pythoness, when removed from her tripod."

Byron was in the right ; the author and the man are seldom one and the same being in the complexion of their humour ; the vapours of the bard, and the vagaries of the muse have very little in common. What more dissimilar identities is it possible to imagine than Don Quixote wandering over Spain in quest of ridiculous adventures, and Cervantes pining in a dungeon ; or John Gilpin performing antics on his diverting expedition to Edmonton, and Cowper wrapped up in his own miseries at Olney ? What can be more contradictory in the nature of the same individual than Sterne, in the words of Byron, whining over a dead ass and neglecting to relieve a living mother ; or Prior addressing the most romantic sonnets to his Chloe, and indulging a most unsentimental passion for a bar-maid : or Swift, breaking the

heart of Vanessa, by his cold-hearted behaviour, while he was filling the world with the praises of her wit and beauty; or Petrarch, abandoning his family, while directing his labours to purify the poetry and refine the feelings of his countrymen, having the honours of paternity twice conferred upon him, and each time the distinction the reward of a different attachment; or Zimmerman, inculcating lessons of beautiful benevolence, while his tyranny was driving his son into madness, and leaving his daughter an outcast from her home; "his harshness," says Goethe, "towards his children was the effect of hypochondria, a sort of madness or moral assassination, to which he himself fell a victim after sacrificing his offspring. But, be it remembered," continues Goethe, "that this man, who appeared to have so vigorous a constitution, was an invalid during the greatest part of his life; that this skilful physician, who had saved so many lives, was himself afflicted with an incurable disorder."

Would that every biographer, in a similar spirit, scrutinised the infirmities of genius, and decided not on their errors before they enquired into the ailments which may have clouded reason, or weakened the powers of volition! We need not have recourse to the stars, like the amiable Melancthon, for the origin of melancholy; we are infinitely more likely to find it in the stomach; but wherever it be, the distaste of life, which is one of its most obvious symptoms, we are told by Goethe, is "always the effect of physical and moral causes combined; and while the former claims the attention of the physician, the latter demands the attention of the moralist." To investigate the phenomena of both is the province of the medical philosopher; and if the object of his enquiry be

to preserve the character of genius from the obloquy which ignorance and uncharitableness too frequently cast upon it, however imperfectly he execute the task, the motive which led him to it should at least disarm censure, though it fail to procure him commendation.

The question of Byron's hypochondria no one can dispute, who has perused his journals. Its various Protean forms are there set forth in language which affectation could not forge, nor fiction mimic. "What can be the reason," he says in his journal, "I awake every morning in actual despair and despondence? In England, five years ago, I had the same kind of hypochondria, but accompanied with so violent a thirst, that I have drank as many as fifteen bottles of soda-water in a night, after going to bed." This unaccountable dejection without a cause, this constant waking in low spirits, he frequently alludes to, and expresses an apprehension of insanity; in his own words, of "dying like Swift, at the top first."

In one of his letters from Italy, after speaking of a slight intermittent, he again recurs to his melancholy. "What I find worst, and cannot get rid of, is the growing depression of my spirits, without sufficient cause. I ride, I am not intemperate in eating or drinking, my general health is as usual, except a slight ague, *which rather does good than not*. It must be constitutional, for I know nothing more than usual to depress me to that degree."

In another, with some truth, he attributes his hypochondria to an hereditary taint. His mother was its victim in its most furious form, her father "was strongly suspected of suicide;" and another very near relative, of the same branch, swallowed poison, but was saved by antidotes. And Byron was said to have more resembled

his maternal grandfather than any of his father's family. In fact, all the symptoms of hypochondria, the effect of some cerebral disorder, were his ; the restlessness of disposition, which renders every change a momentary relief, the aversion from the world which drives the sufferer into solitude, and yet makes solitude insupportable without the excitement of mental occupation, or such employment of the imagination as may divert the individual's attention from his own sad thoughts ; without such employment, Byron was the most miserable of men. It was for this relief that one of his poems was produced in a single night, and to one of these paroxysms of melancholy the public are indebted for one of the most humorous of his productions. " I must write," he says in his journal, " to empty my mind, or I shall go mad."

CHAPTER XXXV.

BYRON CONTINUED.

There is no question that Byron's disorder was grievously aggravated by ill-regulated habits; on the subject of regimen he held most ridiculous opinions; he believed the rigid abstemiousness of an anchorite to be compatible with the most profuse expenditure of nervous energy, and that the exhaustion of the mind was only to be balanced by a corresponding depression of the corporeal powers, so as to preserve a wholesome equilibrium. In very early life, by carrying this absurd opinion into practice, he so weakened the digestive organs, that without the strongest stimulants the stomach was unequal to the retention of food except of the very simplest kind, and in the smallest quantity. In a word, dyspepsia was induced, and the original, and probably hereditary disease which was latent in his constitution, was developed. We believe it was much less for the sake of his personal appearance that Byron was so rigidly abstemious, than most people imagine. In early youth it might have been vanity inspired him with such a dread of obesity, but in his maturer years it was the sufferings from indigestion that followed every occasional excess which drove him to abstemiousness. But there was no moderation in his regimen; he was extreme in all things: the reason he gave Lady Blessington for the austerity of his diet was, that when the body is fat the mind becomes fat also." In his

early letters he dwells with great complacency on his rigid regimen and its lowering effects: but much as his anxiety for his personal appearance might have to do with his abstemiousness, it is highly probable it was the suffering in his head whenever his habit became plethoric that drove him to the other extreme of an insufficient diet. In 1807, he boasts of having reduced himself by violent exercise, much physic, and hot-bathing, twenty-seven pounds. In 1808, he lost two stone more; and on another occasion he writes exultingly to Drury that he has reduced himself from fourteen stone seven pounds to ten stone and a half. Poor Lord Byron was little aware that by these violent measures he was sapping his constitution, and slowly and surely undermining his strength and spirits. At the time, so far from suffering any inconvenience, he describes his agreeable sensations, and seems to have famished himself with the idea of augmenting his happiness. But like Hezekiah, behold! for felicity he had bitter grief. After noticing in his journal, his diet for a week, tea and dry biscuits six per diem, "I wish to God," he says, "I had not dined now, it kills me with heaviness, and yet it was but a pint of Bucellas and fish. O my head! how it aches! the horrors of indigestion!" And elsewhere, "This head, I believe, was given me to ache with!" In the last part of his journal, after a fit of indigestion, he says, "I've no more charity than a vinegar cruet; would that I were an ostrich, and dieted on fire-irons!" And the melancholy diary finishes with these words—"O fool! I shall go mad!"

In Venice, in 1816, his system of diet was regulated by an abstinence almost incredible; "A thin slice of bread," says Moore, "with tea, was his breakfast; a light

vegetable dinner, with a bottle or two of Seltzer-water, tinged with *vin de grave*, and in the evening a cup of green tea, without milk or sugar, formed the whole of his sustenance; the pangs of hunger he appeased by chewing tobacco, and smoking cigars.

In 1819, he complains of being in a state of great exhaustion, attended by such debility of stomach that nothing remained upon it. When Shelly visited him in Ravenna, in 1821, his health was improved by better living; "but he had almost destroyed himself in Venice," continues Shelley, "and such was his state of debility that he was unable to digest any food.

Even in his last journey to Greece he carried the same absurd notion of starving himself into practice; his diet at Missolonghi was sparing in the extreme; a few paras' worth of bread, fish, and olives, was the daily allowance for his table. Such a regimen might have suited the refectory of La Trappe, but it was ill-adapted for the board of one who had assumed the casque and not the cowl, and who had the toil and peril of an opening campaign to provide strength and spirits for. It is unnecessary to add that the physical debility occasioned by this mode of living, from time to time produced such extreme exhaustion that he was obliged to have recourse to stimulants which afforded a temporary excitement, and, by reaction, in their turn augmented the sufferings they were taken to assuage. Ardent spirits, wine, and laudanum, were had recourse to, often in excess, and as often laid aside for an opposite mode of living equally pernicious. Byron, like Johnson, could practise abstinence, but not temperance. He describes the effects of these stimulants on his spirits in one of his letters. "Wine," he says, "exhilarates me to that degree that it makes me savage, and suspicious,

and even quarrelsome ; laudanum has a similar effect, but I can take much of it without any effect at all. The thing that gives me the highest spirits, it seems absurd but true, is a dose of salts." It was early in life that he appears to have become addicted to the use of opium. In 1821, after speaking of exhilarating spirits and strong liquors, he says, he no longer takes laudanum as he used to do. At a later period, informing his friend of some slight indisposition, he tells him he has again lowered his diet, and taken to Epsom salts.

It would be useless to produce further proofs of the irreparable injury done to the constitution of Lord Byron by his injudicious regimen and ill-regulated habits ; and when we find him, in the course of his travels, frequently attacked by local fevers and at various intervals suffering from their recurrence, we may fairly conclude that his constitution had been predisposed to the reception of their miasma by his debilitating regimen. In those countries where intermittents most prevail, low living is thought to be most unfavourable to health, and there can be very little question but that Byron's constitution was shattered by the frequency of those attacks of fever. In 1810, he was seized with a severe fever in the Morea, and like most of the cures he attributes to the absence of physicians, he says his life was saved in this instance by his Albanian followers frightening away the doctors.

On another occasion he had a similar fever at Patros, and speaking of his doctors, he says, he protested against both the assassins when he was seized with the disorder. On his second visit to Greece he was attacked by a similar local fever, and when he swam across the Hellespont he contracted an ague from which he appears to have

suffered long afterwards. In 1817, he complains of the recurrence of a fever in Venice which he caught some years before in the marshes of Elis. In 1819, he writes from Venice, "I have been ill these eight days with a tertian fever caught in a thunder-storm. Yesterday I had the fourth attack; it is the fever of the place and the season." The Countess Guiccoli says he was delirious the whole time; he fancied his mother-in-law haunted his bed-side; yet in his ravings he composed some excellent verses which he subsequently burnt. In 1821, he had another intermittent fever when setting off for Pisa, and he describes it as "bowing to him every two or three days, but not upon intimate terms" with him; he finishes by saying, "I have an intermittent generally every two years," and when the climate is favourable, as it is here, he speaks of his ague as doing him positive good. His last illness was the suite of another fever, of remittent rheumatic character, caught only the day previous to his arrival at Missolonghi. On the vessel coming to an anchor among some little islands on the coast, he bathed in the open sea, on a cold night in January, and continued in the water for a considerable time, although the storm had hardly subsided in which the vessel had been nearly wrecked only a few hours before. Speaking of the circumstance, Fletcher says, "I am fully persuaded it injured my lord's health; he certainly was not taken ill at the time, but in the course of two or three days he complained of pains in his bones, which continued more or less to the time of his death." And let us take this opportunity of doing justice to the good sense and good feeling that is to be found in every observation of this faithful servant. Fletcher's fidelity to his master survived his loss, while that of his historians has been fatal to his memory.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

BYRON CONTINUED.

In the foregoing account there are fevers enough recorded to have shattered the vigour of half a dozen constitutions; and Byron's constitution, indifferent at the best, and debilitated by an ill-judged regimen, was so enervated by these various intermittents, as to have rendered the treatment of any serious disorder that might befall him, perplexing, in the extreme, to a young physician, and even difficult enough to the best experienced: this must be allowed in justice, as well as in charity, to the medical attendants of Lord Byron in his last illness.

Whenever death is the termination of disease, the world is too apt to call the nature of the medical treatment into question, and in many cases, to judge the inevitable issue of life and death as a matter between man and man, with little reference to an overruling agent. When one mode of treatment has been unsuccessful, we naturally suppose that another might have answered better, and, reasoning from antecedent facts, nothing is easier than to say, the result has been unfortunate, but another course might have produced a different effect. God is the only judge of this, and the judgment of man is always partial, and oftentimes presumptuous. It is with a full conviction of this truth, with an eager desire to avoid the assumption of arrogant pretension, and the suspicion of professional animosity, that we venture to

speaking on the subject of Byron's last illness, and of the manner in which he was treated. There are circumstances, however, connected with his last illness, which render an enquiry into its nature and result a matter of more than temporary interest, or of idle curiosity. It is not a simple question of skill or inability, of a disease mistaken or understood, but one of climate and constitution, and the modifying influence of both over disease.

The medical attendants of Byron were young practitioners; they had little experience in the treatment of the disorders of the Levant, and they had little, if any, previous acquaintance with the constitution and peculiarities of their patient. The best informed European physician who commences practice in the East, finds his knowledge at fault when he trusts to the same remedies in the latter, which he has found efficient in the former, in similar diseases. He will find those which he was accustomed to consider inflammatory in the one, characterised in the other by symptoms of irritability, or of general disturbance of the nervous system, contradistinguished from inflammation by the inefficacy of antiphlogistic measures. If any general observation holds good in that science, to which general rules are seldom, if ever, applicable, the assertion may be hazarded, that nine tenths of the maladies of hot climates are to be remedied without the lancet. The nervous energy suddenly depressed is with difficulty raised, and in a shattered constitution with still more difficulty repaired. The ignorance of this fact may have subjected Byron to injudicious treatment, for that his disorder was maltreated there appears much reason to apprehend.

From the effects of the bathing on "the cold night in

January" he appears never to have recovered. By Fletcher's account, he was subsequently "one day well, another day ailing, though still able to go abroad." His symptoms were those of a febrile remittent and rheumatic character for some weeks, till at length, harassed in mind by continual vexations, tormented by the turbulence of the Suliote barbarians who were in his pay, and thwarted in all his endeavours to serve Greece by the rapacious chiefs, and the jealous Franks who were about him, his irritability increased, and concurred, as Moore has well expressed it, "with whatever predisposing tendencies were already in his constitution, to bring on that convulsive fit which was the forerunner of his death. The fit he alludes to was that epileptic seizure which we have elsewhere noticed, and which, after depriving him of sense and speech, and violently convulsing his whole frame, left him in a state of such excessive weakness, that his strength never again rallied. The morning succeeding it he was found to be better, but still pale and weak : he complained of a sensation of weight in his head ; leeches were applied to his temples, but a much larger quantity of blood was abstracted than his physicians had intended, for all their efforts to check the bleeding were completely baffled. We are told that blood continued to flow so copiously, that from exhaustion he fainted ; and it appears to have been on this very day, in the midst of his sufferings, that his life was threatened by his own soldiers. Colonel Stanhope has well described the scene. "Soon after his dreadful paroxysm, when faint with over-bleeding, he was lying on his sick bed, with his whole nervous system completely shaken ; the mutinous Suliotes, their splendid attire covered with dirt, broke into his apartment, brandishing their costly arms,

and loudly demanding their wild rights. Lord Byron, electrified by this sudden act, seemed to recover from his sickness, and the more the Suliotes raged, the more his calm courage triumphed. The scene was truly sublime."

The excessive bleeding above noticed, under all the circumstances of the case, was unquestionably fatal to Lord Byron; the death-blow was given to his shattered constitution, and the little strength that he had left to combat with the slow insidious malady which had been lurking in his frame for many days, was totally and irretrievably destroyed.

Captain Parry was the only person about him who seems to have been aware of the nature of his attack, and understood the treatment that ought to have been adopted. "His lordship," he says, "had not eaten any thing but cheese, fish, vegetables, and bread, for several days. His disease was *epileptic*, and arose from debility and bad diet." The language of this rough soldier is that of a man of common sense: he understood the constitution of Byron probably better than any of his attendants; and when Byron still spoke to him of the necessity of low living, he said to him, "You must not live too low, my lord; in this swampy place some stimulus is necessary; but your physicians should know best."—"I considered," he continues, "there was some difference between his constitution and those of the persons whom Dr. Bruno was accustomed to treat;" (and with less courtesy than might have been desired, he adds,) "had he turned his doctors out of doors, and returned to the habits of an English gentleman as to his diet, he would probably have survived many years." With the latter part of this opinion we entirely agree.

Alluding to his state of health in the middle of March, Moore observes, "from the period of his attack in February he had been from time to time indisposed, and more than once had complained of vertigoes which made him feel as if intoxicated. He was also frequently affected with nervous sensations, with shiverings and tremors, which were apparently the effects of excessive debility : and proceeding upon this notion," continues Moore, "he abstained almost wholly from animal food, and ate little else but dry toast, vegetables, and cheese."

The grievous error of attributing to a plethoric state of the constitution such symptoms as have been just described, no one acquainted with the simplest principles of medicine could possibly have fallen into ; but of these Byron, with all his various knowledge, was lamentably ignorant.

Plutarch has well advised all literary men to study the science of health. It is one of the anomalies in modern education, that total ignorance on so important a subject as the preservation of health, or the prevention of disease, should be compatible with a reputation for general erudition ; it is strange, indeed, that while the science soars above the clouds in quest of the knowledge of the heavens, or seeks in the lower strata of the earth an elucidation of the mystery of its formation, that the wonders of the animal economy should attract no portion of its attention, and that while the elements of every other art are acquired in our colleges, not even a superficial knowledge of the first principles of medicine is a necessary part of a gentleman's education. Students may come from Cambridge and Oxford with all "the blushing honours of the university thick upon them." They may come forth "decked with the spoils of every art, and the

wreath of every muse;" champions of theology, prodigies of erudition, masters of the wisdom of former times, and yet be actually ignorant of the theory of the circulation of the blood. They may have wasted the best years of youth, and the first of life's blessings, in the acquisition of unspoken tongues, and yet not know how to obviate the evil effects of studious habits on their health, to check disease,

"Prevent the danger, or prescribe the cure."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

BYRON CONTINUED.

We are now arrived at the last illness of Lord Byron. Its immediate cause appears to have been long exposure to rain on the 19th of April. It is well to bear in mind that the night bath we have elsewhere alluded to was on the 4th of January; the 15th of February he was seized with the epileptic fit, and on the 9th of April commenced the illness which terminated in death on the 19th.

Immediately after his return home on the 9th, he was seized with shivering; he complained of fever and much head-ache. Dr. Bruno proposed bleeding; to this he objected, and Parry seconded his remonstrance. "I was confident," says Parry, "from the mode in which he had lately lived, and had been lately tormented, that to bleed him would be to kill him. *He was fairly worn out and the momentary heat and symptoms of fever were little more, I believe, than the expiring struggles, or the last flashes, of an ardent spirit.*"

Parry's opinion is not couched in medical phraseology, but it is the language of common sense—and common sense at the bedside of the sick is more valuable than technical absurdity, or theoretical erudition without experience.

The following day he was thought to be so much better, as to be allowed to go abroad, but on his return he had perpetual shudderings, and was unusually dejected

in his spirits. On the 11th he was very unwell, had shivering fits continually, pains over every part of his body, particularly in his head; he talked a great deal, and rather in a wandering manner. Dr. Bruno saw no danger, but Parry became alarmed for his safety, and wrung his unwilling consent to go immediately to Zante for change of air.

The two following days the fever rather decreased; he rose during the day, and even left his bed-room. In the meantime a vessel was prepared for his departure, but a hurricane ensued, and it was impossible to leave the port; "and it seems," says Parry, "as if the elements had combined with man to ensure Lord Byron's death."

On the 14th Dr. Bruno, having exhibited soporifics without advantage, again urged the necessity of bleeding, but his patient would not hear of it; he arose and left his bed-room for a short time, but returned to it exhausted, and he came out no more; he was occasionally delirious in the evening; "but his delirium," says Parry, "arose not from inflammation. It was that alienation of mind which is so frequently the consequence of excessive debility."

"There was no symptom of violence in the early period of his disease, such as I have seen in other young men attacked with fever—such as I believe would have been most severe in Lord Byron's case; the delirium," he continues, "at every stage arose from extreme debility." Had he said from nervous irritability, he might have spoken more technically; but the substance of his opinion could not have been more correct.

Byron's delirium was no more to be removed by anti-inflammatory means, than the raving arising from exhaustion in typhus fever, or from excessive irritability in

delirium tremens. Dr. Bruno, having for the last two days endeavoured in vain to persuade him to submit to bleeding, Mr. Milingen, a young surgeon, was sent for, to prevail on the patient to undergo the operation. Mr. Milingen says he tried every means that reasoning could suggest towards attaining his object, but his efforts were fruitless.

"Is it not," said Byron, "asserted by Dr. Reid, that less slaughter is effected by the lance than the lancet, that minute instrument of mighty mischief? And do not those other words of his apply to my case," he continued, "where he says, 'the drawing of blood from a nervous patient is like *loosening the chords of a musical instrument whose tones already fail for want of sufficient tension*?' Who is nervous if I am not? do with me whatever else you like, but bleed me you shall not. I have had several inflammatory fevers in my time, when more robust and plethoric, yet I got through them without bleeding; this time also will I take my chance."

After much entreaty, however, Mr. Milingen extorted a promise, that if his symptoms increased he would submit to the remedy.

On the 16th he was alarmingly ill, and almost constantly delirious. "He spoke," says Parry, "English and Italian, and very wildly. I implored the doctors not to bleed him, and to keep his extremities warm, for in them there was already the coldness of coming death. I was told there was no doubt of his recovery, and I might attend to my business without apprehension."

Mr. Milingen now pressed on him the necessity of submitting to be bled, and he certainly employed the argument that was most likely to weigh with Byron; he gave him plainly to understand that utter and permanent de

privation of reason might be the consequence of his refusal. "I had now," says Mr. Milingen, "hit on the sensible chord, and, partly annoyed by our importunities, partly persuaded, he cast at us both the fiercest glance of vexation, and, throwing out his arm, said in an angry tone, 'There; you are, I see, a d——d set of butchers—take away as much blood as you like, but have done with it.'

"We seized the moment," continues Mr. Milingen, "and drew about twenty ounces; on coagulating, the blood presented a strong buffy coat, yet the relief obtained did not correspond to the hopes we had formed. *The restlessness and agitation increased, and the patient spoke several times in an incoherent manner.*"

No doubt his symptoms were increased; and as little doubt is there that the inference that was drawn from the buffiness of the blood was fallacious, inasmuch as any appearance of coagulated blood in a hot climate is an imperfect criterion of febrile action; and even in this country, few physicians, we apprehend, would consider the buffiness of the blood an indication for further depletion without other concomitant phenomena in the temperature, the appearance and the temperament of the patient, to corroborate the proof of inflammation.

On the 17th the bleeding was twice repeated, "and the appearance of inflammation on the brain," says Moore, "were now hourly increasing." If there was any inflammation in the case, it is strange that the cerebral symptoms should on every occasion have been aggravated after the bleeding. "Each time after the depletion," says Parry, "he fainted; his debility became so excessive that his delirium assumed the appearance of a wild rambling manner, and he complained bitterly of

want of sleep. Blisters were applied to the lower extremities, but their application was too late to have proved beneficial."

It appears that there was neither order nor quiet in his apartment: that all the comforts of the sick chamber were wanting; that his attendants were so bewildered as to be totally disqualified for their painful duty, and that Parry, the only one of them whose attendance might have been beneficial to his friend, was either otherwise employed, or his presence little desired, except by the invalid. But in Parry's occasional visits the two or three last days of his life, he speaks of "such confusion and discomfort in the sick man's chamber as he never wished to see again."

On the 18th, in the afternoon, he rose, and supported by his servant, was able to walk across the chamber, and when seated, asked for a book, read for a few minutes, and found himself exhausted: he then took Tita's arm and tottered to his bed. A consultation was proposed; Byron on being told that Mavrocordato advised it, unwillingly gave his consent. Dr. Fieber, Mr. Milingen's assistant, and Luca Vaya, a Greek physician, were accordingly admitted, on condition of asking no questions. They promised to be silent: the business of the finishing ceremony was gravely performed; one of the doctors was about to speak, but Byron reproved him. "Recollect," said he, "your promise, and go away."

The following is Mr. Milingen's account of the consultation. "Doctors Bruno and Luca proposed having recourse to anti-spasmodics and other remedies, employed in the last stage of typhus; Fieber and I maintained that they would hasten the fatal termination; that nothing could be more empirical than flying from one ex-

treme to the other; that if we all thought the complaint was owing to the metastasis of rheumatic inflammation, the existing symptoms only depended on the rapid and extensive progress it had made in an organ previously so weakened and irritable. Antiphlogistic means could never prove hurtful in this case; they would become useless only if disorganisation were already operated; but then, since all hopes were gone, what means would not prove superfluous? We recommended the application of several leeches behind the ears and along the course of the jugular veins; a large blister between the shoulders, and sinapisms to the feet, as affording the last hope of success. Dr. Bruno being the patient's physician, had the casting vote, and prepared the anti-spasmodic potion which Dr. Luca and he had agreed upon: it was a strong infusion of valerian and ether. After its administration, the convulsive movement, the delirium increased, but notwithstanding my representations, a second dose was given, and after articulating confusedly a few broken phrases, the patient sunk shortly after into a comatose sleep, which the next day terminated in death. He expired on the 19th of April, at six o'clock in the afternoon."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

BYRON CONTINUED.

Now in Parry's account, Dr. Frieber, so far from coinciding in opinion with Mr. Millingen, had warmly condemned the mode in which Lord Byron had been treated. "It was by his recommendation and advice," says Parry, "I believe that it was now resolved to administer the bark. I was sent for to persuade Lord Byron to take it." From an intimate acquaintance of several years with Dr. Frieber, as he is termed, but whose true name was Schrieber, we are enabled to corroborate the observation of Captain Parry. Parry may have been mistaken about the medicine, but at the period of its administration, whatever it might have been, it was too late to have produced any effect: when Parry was inducing him to swallow a few mouthfuls of it he found his hands were deadly cold. It was now evident Byron knew he was dying. Tita, his affectionate servant, stood weeping by his bed, holding his hand, and turning away his face from his master, while Byron, looking at him steadily, exclaimed, "*O questa e un bella scena!*" When Fletcher came to him he endeavoured to express his last wishes, and between his anxiety, says Moore, to make his servant understand him, and the rapid failure of his powers of utterance, a most painful scene ensued. On Fletcher asking him whether he should bring pen and paper to take down his words, "O no!" he replied, "there is no time;" his voice became

hardly audible: for a considerable time he continued muttering to himself a few names of the friends who were most dear to him. After a feeble effort to explain his wishes, he exclaimed, "Now I have told you all."

"My lord," replied Fletcher, "I have not understood a word!"

"Not understood me!" said the dying man, with a look of the utmost distress, "what a pity—then it is too late—all is over."

"I hope not," said Fletcher; "but the Lord's will be done."

"Yes, not mine," replied Byron! He then tried to utter a few words, of which none were intelligible except "My sister! my child!" When Parry loosened the bandage that was tied round his head, he appeared to revive a little; he shed tears after it was loosened, then took Parry's hand, uttered a faint good night, and then sank into a slumber.

"It is plain," says Moore, "that this person had, by his blunt practical good sense, acquired far more influence over his lordship's mind than was possessed by any of the other persons about him."* During the evening he

* With feelings of regret, we have to add that this unfortunate gentleman, whose goodness of heart and straight forward conduct Byron was wont to speak of in the highest terms, is now the inmate of a lunatic asylum. A long series of misfortunes, the cause or consequence, we know not which, of intemperate habits, had "steeped him in poverty to the very lips," and ultimately deprived him of reason. A friend of ours, who had known him in better days, when lately visiting the wards of Bedlam, heard his name pronounced as he passed one of the cells, and when he turned to the speaker and tried to recognise his features, the wretched man exclaimed. "Do you

occasionally slumbered, and when he awoke he muttered to himself rapidly and incoherently. For the next twenty-four hours he lay in a comatose state, incapable of sense or motion; life was only indicated for some hours by the rattling in his throat; at length it ceased, and Byron was a corpse at sunset!!!

The autopsy of his remains was conducted by his medical attendants; their prognosis was borne out by the appearances they discovered or described—indubitable appearances of inflammatory action on the brain were stated to have been observed. They might have been deceitful—they may have been imaginary; the attention of the examiners was pre-eminently directed to the brain, and with all their anxiety to look for facts, the forms of preconceived opinions might have presented themselves to the senses, with all the vivid force of actual impressions. Anatomists well know that in the most violent disorders death is very frequently unaccompanied by the visible lesion of any organ, and that even where actual disorganisation is discovered, the cause of death may have been elsewhere. The spine may be gorged with blood—the vessels of the brain may be likewise turgid. The agony of death, and not the disease, may have occasioned these appearances, or the position of the body after death may account for them. From the *post mortem* examination, in this case, the existence of inflamma-

forget poor Parry!" If this note should fall under the eye of any friend of Byron, who would willingly do that, which, if Byron were within the influence of earthly feelings, could not fail to be pleasing to his spirit, he may probably be induced to enquire into the fate of this poor gentleman, and have the charity, if it be practicable, to relieve his misery.

tion has been generally inferred, and the treatment has been censured only for the tardy employment of the lancet. The writer of an elaborate article in the Westminster Review has adopted the notion, that Byron died in consequence of an inflammation of the brain ; at least, he adds, " if the appearances really were as described, that he might have been saved by early and copious bleeding is certain. That his medical attendants had not, until it was too late to do any thing, any suspicion of the true nature of his disease, we are fully satisfied." No less fully satisfied are we that the writer of this article was as ignorant of the true nature of the disease of Byron, as he presumes his physicians to have been, and that bleeding at any period of the disorder would not only have been ineffectual, but injurious. The indication, we take it, from the commencement of the disorder, was the alleviation of excessive nervous irritability, arising from a local remittent fever, slowly developed, and indistinctly marked in all its symptoms. Mild aperients, antimonial sudorifics, the occasional exhibition of camphor and ammonia, and even more direct stimulants than the diffusible, when the exhaustion was extreme ; the use of anodynes when the nervous symptoms were increased, and even of opiates when irritability was such as to produce insomnolency, and that kind of cerebral excitement which resembles *delirium tremens*.

This is the treatment in similar disorders of the Levant we have seen successfully adopted, and which we believe was far better adapted to the case before us than the opposite plan that was practised. At this distance of time, from the event to which it refers, were the question mooted with the unworthy motive of calling professional abili-

ty into question, for the purpose of cavilling with its conduct, because its efforts were unsuccessful, these observations would merit any obloquy that might befall them. But, they have been written with other views, and we trust, at least, that the younger part of our professional brethren, who visit climes dissimilar to their own, may profit by the experience which others may have reached by the road of error, and may be instrumental to the preservation of lives of perhaps greater value to the world than their own.*

* The following passage from Miss Berry's admirable work, entitled "Social Life in England and France from the restoration of Charles the Second, to the French Revolution," contains the opinion of a lady of great attainments, and of nice discrimination on the character of Lord Byron's female portraits:

"If Joanna Baillie, in her exquisitely portrayed characters of excellence and of virtuous feeling, sometimes betrays an unwillingness to step into the dominion of vice, and to encounter the storm of violent and degrading passions, Lord Byron, by choice, and perhaps by his long preference for eastern subjects, has also given a sameness to many of his heroes, and reduced all his heroines to one model. They are all fond females, clinging to a protector, without the smallest discrimination, or opinion, or even curiosity, as to the character or situation of the man to whom they are attached; and this with a boldness of sexual passion, which not all the author's delicate and admirable descriptions of their personal beauty can at all conceal. He never calls on the associations, sentiments and feelings, founded on individual choice, admiration of excellence, and comparative merit. He equally neglects the combats between duty and love, in minds capable of appreciating the one, and of exalting the other from desire to passion; to say nothing of parental affection, and the yet more sublime, because more perfectly disinterested, sacrifices of friendship. He confines him-

self to paint women as the mere females of the human species, who, except that they share with man, 'that paragon of animals,' superior personal beauty, are described as little distinguished from the females of any other animals; inspire the same sort of blind and furious passion to those of the other sex; are treated with little more ceremony while together; and are left as easily, in quest of prey or revenge.

"Who but must regret to find Lord Byron's muse thus fettered, instead of having taken advantage of subjects that would have opened an inexhaustible field to her various powers? for who can doubt the variety of those powers, when reading the exquisite and exalted descriptive poetry scattered over all his works—always associating the scene he describes with the most invigorating sentiments of the human kind?"

We shall have occasion hereafter to refer to this work of Miss B.'s, which has not been published in America, but is very popular in England. The modesty of the author has concealed her name, but as Mrs. Jameson refers to it in her last work, "The Beauties of Charles the Second," it can be no secret at home.—*Ed.*

CHAPTER XXXIX.

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

The celebrated John Bell has said in one of his works, that the sight of an unskilful operation was more serviceable to the spectators than that of the most successful and expert one, inasmuch as those who witnessed the defects of the operator had the opportunity afforded them of profiting by his errors. The principle of the observation applies to the followers of literary pursuits; there is more evil to be avoided by an acquaintance with the infirmities of genius, than by the observation of the manifold advantages of the best regulated habits, and happily constituted temperaments. Nevertheless, the history of a well-ordered mind, like that of Scott, is not without its lesson; and perhaps, by the encouragement of the example it offers for imitation, exhibits the advantage and the reward of mental management, of moderated enthusiasm, and of the government of imagination, as powerfully as the calamities of Cowper and the errors of Lord Byron tend to persuade their followers to avoid their errors. In our notice of Scott, it will be unnecessary to enter into such minute, or biographical details, as the nature of our enquiry into the infirmities of Cowper and Byron led us into. In these instances the sufferings and the faults of the individuals were wound up with all the circumstances of their lives; but in the case of Sir Walter Scott, his career had the tranquillity of a sum-

mer stream, pursuing the even tenor of its way in one undeviating course. It was Sir Walter's good fortune to be born in that country, whose genius, in the language of the Irish Demosthenes, "is cast in the happy medium between the spiritless acquiescence of submissive poverty, and the sturdy credulity of pampered wealth: cool and ardent—adventurous and persevering—which wings its eagle flight against the blaze of every science, with an eye that never winks, and a wing that never tires." It was his still happier lot from his earliest years to "have known the luscious sweets of plenty, to have slept with full content about his bed, and never waked but to a joyful morning;" to have had no difficulties to struggle with in his early career, no privations to endure, no extraordinary adventures to encounter, and few disappointments, for a great portion of his life, to sear his feelings, to irritate his temper, or to sour his affections. The rare combination of splendid genius and sober judgment, whether the occasion or the consequence of his fortunate position in social life, must have unquestionately been influenced not a little by the favourable circumstances which attended his career for so long a period; but one thing is certain—the result of his temperament, however constituted, or by whatever circumstances confirmed, was the diffusion of an exuberant benevolence over his feelings, which communicated a spirit of general philanthropy to every composition that issued from his pen. This was the great charm, not only of his writings, but of his conversation—the spell by which the mighty magician of romance worked on the feelings of mankind, and bound up the faculties in wonder and enchantment.

The peculiarities of temperament, in no small degree depend upon the health of the individual; irritability of temper, and placidity of disposition, much oftener than people imagine, are questions of bodily ailments, or the absence of them; peevishness and good humour are but too frequently matters that are relative to physical peculiarities, and timidity and resolution are qualities which are determined to a great extent by the condition of the nervous system. This doctrine, like that of phrenology, has been impugned, not because it is untrue, but because its tendency is considered to be dangerous. We, however, believe it to be otherwise; and in asserting it, we war but with the malignity which "tracks the errors of genius to the tomb," not with the morality which visits the depravity of the heart with legitimate censure. Who can peruse the biography of Pope without feeling that the irritability of his temper was the consequence of bodily infirmities, which rendered his life "a long disease?" Who can doubt, but that the moroseness of Johnson's humour, was the result of a "fierce hypochondria," and that Byron's errors and eccentricities were largely influenced by an hereditary disease, aggravated by alternate extremes of irregular and abstemious habits? And who indeed can doubt but that Scott's happy temperament was mainly indebted for its felicity to long continued health.

If ailing people were to argue from such a doctrine, that the conduct of their tempers, and the government of their passions, (being at certain intervals under the dominion of disease,) had wholly ceased to be under the control of reason—if they imagined that as invalids they were privileged to be as irritable as Pope, as mo-

rose as Johnson, as wayward as Byron, as intemperate as Burns, or as melancholy as Cowper, not only without reproach, but with impunity; then indeed there would be danger in the doctrine, and truth itself would not justify its promulgation. But the objection is an idle one, for neither peevishness, nor moroseness, nor morbid sensibility, nor melancholy, can be indulged in with impunity; each carries with it its own punishment, and its votary (if such it could have) would soon become its victim. But even if his health suffered not from the indulgence of his capricious humours, how simple would he be, how little acquainted with the history of genius or the calamities of its children, if he expected that the world would privilege his peevishness, make allowance for his petulance, or pity his infirmities? Fool that he would be to expect its charity; what consideration do the errors or eccentricities of genius ever meet with from it?

Scott and Goethe are two of the most remarkable instances in modern times of genius so divested of its ordinary errors, that the admiration it called forth was scarcely mingled with a sound of literary hostilities. In both, the poetic temperament was seen to greater advantage than we have been accustomed to behold it. It disqualified them for no duties, public or private; it unfitted them not for the tender offices of friendship or affection, and the world for once enjoyed the rare exhibition of two great poets who were good husbands, good fathers, and good citizens. Their works were imbued with a spirit of philosophical philanthropy, which the public taste was luckily in the vein to appreciate; and if their competitors joined in their applause, it was because they had no injuries to complain

of at their hands, no bitter asperity to apprehend from their criticisms, no injustice from their strictures, no ungenerous treatment from the pride of their exalted stations. In each instance a happy temperament enabled its possessor to preserve that station which his genius had attained, and in either the management of that temperament was commensurate with the enjoyment of health and vigour. It required, indeed, no ordinary stock of health to enable an author to resist the wear and tear of mind and body, which the incessant application to literary pursuits is productive of; no little vigour, both bodily and mental, to render an individual capable of the immense amount of literary labour which Scott had the courage to encounter, and the persevering industry to get through without seclusion from the world, and apparently without fatigue. By what happy means was he enabled to accomplish so much? Were his days and nights devoted to these labours? Was the midnight oil expended in their performance? Were the hours of composition stolen from his slumbers, and the freshness of the morning devoted to the reparation of exhausted strength? Was the "pale and melancholy cast of thought" spread over his features? Was the fountain of inspiration dried up for a season after his imagination had poured forth a living flood of truth or fiction? Did the enthusiasm of the poet prevail over the sober sentiments of the man? or were they so exalted by the chivalrous exploits he described, that the excitement of his feelings was followed by lassitude and depression? In short, was the enthusiasm of his page so faithful a transcript of the ardour of his breast, that in giving breath to the

sweet music of romance, the sound of every striking passage was so much in unison with the tone of dearly cherished thoughts, that the vibration of every well-remembered note extended to the heart? In sooth, we believe that no such fervid emanations were called forth by "the ideal presence" of the scenery, or the heroes he called into existence. That he contemplated them with pleasure, and even with pride, is very probable; but that he suffered his raptures, either at the moment of composition, or subsequently to it, to disturb the serenity of his feelings, we greatly doubt.

Scott's enthusiasm was in his fancy, not in his feelings; his benevolence was heart-born, and his imagination was subservient to its impulses, but both were under the dominion of a sober judgment. His nervous energies, we apprehend, were seldom called on to answer the sudden demand of any inordinate or irregular affection—a demand, often repeated, which, more than any amount of literary labour, exhausts the spirits, and makes inroads on the strength of the constitution. The means by which he was enabled to accomplish so much in so wonderfully short a period were simply these: he rose early, he lived temperately, he retired to rest at seasonable hours; the forenoon was devoted to his studies, and those studies debarred neither recreation nor exercise; he entered on proper pursuits at proper times, and the result of the well-regulated employment of less than the fourth part of the four-and-twenty hours, was, that he was enabled to perform a multiplicity of labours which we can hardly imagine the incessant employment of a whole life sufficient for the execution of. His time for composition was usually

in the morning, from seven till twelve or one o'clock. The ordinary amount of a day's production was fifteen or sixteen pages, and for many years the number of his publications was from three to eight volumes a year. But, what extraordinary fertility of imagination was necessary for the series of compositions that issued from his pen with such astonishing rapidity!

CHAPTER XL.

SIR WALTER SCOTT CONTINUED.

These volumes carried with them the internal evidence of the healthy feelings of the author; they were evidently the productions of a man who was at peace with himself, "in love with his nativity," and in charity with all mankind. They smelt not of the midnight lamp, but of the rosy morning air, whose freshness was diffused as well over the feelings as the features of their author; no sickly pallor, no sentimental gloom, no morbid sensibility overclouded either, and whether we conversed with him in person or communed with him in print, our hearts acknowledged,

"A merrier man,
Within the limit of becoming mirth,
We never spent an hour's talk withal;
—— For aged years played truant at his tales,
And younger hearings were quite ravished,
So sweet and voluble was his discourse."

But there was nothing, we repeat it, of the feverish fervour of enthusiasm in the feelings of Scott, and no traces of that passion in his countenance. There was indeed as little of the celestial inspiration of the bard in the ruddy aspect of the author as can be well imagined; and but little in his regard to give the observer an idea of

"The poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling,
Glancing from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven."

There might be evidences indeed of deep and even painful thinking in the lines of his prominent forehead and overhanging brows; but there was more of the vigorous-minded country gentleman in the general expression of his countenance, than of the "poet of imagination all compact."

Scott's sensibility, fortunately for his felicity, was not of that intense description that its tranquillity was staked on the hazard of his literary success, or that the labour of composition was coupled with the anxieties of authorship, the ardour of enthusiasm, or the ecstasies of successful genius. In this respect Scott had the decided advantage over the majority of the *genus irritabile* of authors, whether the works of prose or poetry. Pope could not proceed with certain passages of his translation of Homer without shedding tears. Metastasio was found weeping over his *Olympiad*. Alfieri speaks of a whole act in one of his plays written under a paroxysm of enthusiasm, weeping while he wrote it. Dryden was seized with violent tremors after the composition of his celebrated ode. Rousseau, in conceiving the first idea of his *Essay on the Arts*, felt the disturbance of his nervous system approaching to delirium. Buffon could not enter on a work which absorbed his faculties, without feeling his head burn, and his features becoming flushed. Beattie, after the completion of a volume of metaphysics, never had the courage to look into the book when it was printed, so great was the horror of his undertaking. Goldoni says he never recovered from the exhaustion

of his spirits after the production of sixteen comedies in one year. Smollet by over-excitement disordered his brain, and laboured for six months under a coma vigil. These and many other instances have been enumerated by D'Israeli in his admirable work. Scott, however, was luckily exempt from the excitement of such morbid feelings, and from the delusions which are the consequences of them. It is but a step, it is said, which separates the fervour of enthusiasm from the frenzy of insanity, and not unfrequently are the children of genius found tottering on the verge of that calamity. Tasso held a conversation with a spirit gliding on a sunbeam, and we are told by Thuanus, he was frequently seized with fits of distraction which did not prevent him writing excellent verses. Malebranche heard the voice of God distinctly within him. Lord Herbert interrogated the Deity about the publication of his book, and in a kneeling posture calmly awaited the reply. Pascal often started from his chair at the appearance of a fiery gulf opening by his side. Luther conversed with demons, and on one occasion threw an inkstand at the devil's head, an action which his German commentator greatly applauds, because there is nothing the devil hates so much as ink. Descartes after long seclusion, was followed by an invisible person calling on him to pursue the search of truth. Swedenburgh not only walked over Paradise, but has given a description of the fashion of the houses; but the glorious egotism of Benvenuto Cellini, says D'Israeli, outstripped the visions of all his predecessors, for he was accustomed to behold a resplendent light hovering over his own shadow.

In short, that literary boundary of which we have

spoken, which separates enthusiasm from insanity, is like the narrow bridge of Al Sirat, which leads the followers of Mahomet from earth to heaven, but by so narrow a path, that the passenger is in momentary danger of falling into the dismal gulf of hell, which yawns beneath him. But Scott was in little peril of falling into the purgatory of enthusiasm: if he ever advanced towards the boundary in question, it was with a steady step and an air of self-possession, which showed he was prepared for the dangers he approached.

But independently of the well-regulated habits by which he was enabled to accomplish so vast a number of literary performances, nature appears to have endowed his constitution with a robustness, proportioned to the vigour of his mind, which was capable of overcoming mental labour without fatigue, which would have been not only wearisome but overwhelming to another. There is something in the vigour of the higher order of genius, which contributes not only to longevity, but renders the individual equal to labours which one can hardly imagine the powers of one man capable of accomplishing,

"Those," says Tissot, "who would undertake the defence of long-continued studies, which I am far from wishing to under-rate the importance of, in pointing out the dangers to which literary men expose themselves by excessive application, may cite many instances of studious men who have attained old age, in the full enjoyment of health, bodily and mental. I am not ignorant of the history of such persons. I have even known some few, but the generality have not the same good fortune to boast of; there are few men, however happily constituted, strong enough to

support with impunity such excessive toil ; and if they did support it, who knows what sufferings they may not have endured, and if they might have added to their length of days, had they attached themselves to another sort of life ? It is true, we must admit, that the greater portion of those great men that the human race acknowledge for its masters, had arrived to an advanced age : Homer, Democritus, Parmenides, Pythagoras, Hippocrates, Plato, Plutarch, Bacon, Galileo, Harvey, Boyle, Locke, Leibnitz, Newton, all lived to be old men,—but from this must we infer that excessive mental application is not injurious ? Let us beware of drawing so false a conclusion. We may only presume that there are men born for those sorts of excesses, and perhaps that a happy disposition of the fibres which form great men, is the same as that which conduces to longevity. *Mens sana in corpore sano*. Besides it is much more by the strength of their genius, than by the assiduity of their labour, that literary men make to themselves an immortal name, Moments of delightful leisure, distractions which celebrity necessarily brings with it, exercise which the duties of their high station in the world obliges them to take,—these in a great measure tend to repair the evil which literary employment occasions.”

Tissot proceeds to eulogise the well-regulated habits of an eminent professor of Oriental literature, who had just died, and had he been speaking of the author of *Waverley*, he could not have used language more suitable, or more characteristic of the subject of his notice.

“Every body remembers at this moment,” he continues, “and recalls even before I name him, that great

man who for more than fifty years was the ornament, and the delight of this city and its academies : he had cultivated the sciences from his earliest youth even to his last days ; he was profoundly versed in all those studies which were more immediately the business of his vocation, and of which the domain is so extensive ; there was no subject on which he was not instructed ; so much knowledge implied immense labour, yet his health was not injured by it ; we have seen him enter on his eighteenth lustrum, without having lost a particle of his genius, or of the vivacity of his senses ; and will this example be adduced as an objection to my argument ? It cannot be, for the recollection of the details of his life that are given here, fulfil the purposes of presenting him as a model for the contemplation of all men of genius. He knew how to be a scholar without ceasing to be a man ; he knew how to acquire the profoundest knowledge, and the most various attainments, without sacrificing his duties to erudition, in performing those of a citizen, a father, a friend, a member of society, and a professor of learning, as if he had been only a simple citizen, a domestic being, and a man of the world. When wearied by his mental labours it was his custom to repair his strength and spirits by exercising his body in the cultivation of his grounds, and he supported both by that gaiety of heart, that amenity of manners, which is killed in the study, and which is only maintained by communing with our fellow-men for our mutual advantage."

CHAPTER XLI.

SIR WALTER SCOTT CONTINUED.

The health of Scott derived no little advantage from such exercise and intercourse as Tissot speaks of. We are told by Allan Cunningham, "it was his pleasure to walk out frequently among his plantations, with a small hatchet and hand saw, with which he lopped off superfluous boughs, or removed an entire tree when it was marring the growth of others. He loved also to ride over the country, on a little stout galloway, and the steepest hill did not stop him, nor the deepest water daunt him." His passion for field sports furnished him likewise with a recreation, which was no less conducive to his well-being; his taste for such pastime is, indeed, a singularity which is not often to be met with in men of studious habits. Literature, they think, is the noblest pleasure that can be chased, and it is unfortunately the only one they pursue. There are so few instances on record, of literary men indulging in the pleasures of the field, that it seems almost incongruous to speak in the same breath of a scholar and a sportsman. But Scott was an exception; when his imagination was wearied "with babbling of green fields," he betook himself to them with a right good appetite, for the wholesome recreation they afforded. With his "veteran favourite," Maida, "the fleetest of highland deer-hounds," it was his delight to sally forth, and to make the pleasures of the course the object or the excuse for many a delightful ramble over

the romantic hills of his native country. Perhaps it was the frequency of such rambles which induced the Ettrick Shepherd to believe that "he had a little of the old outlaw blood in him, and if he had been able would have been a desperate poacher and black fisher." But with all the poaching propensities of the author of *Waverley*, no Sir Thomas Lacy of his neighbourhood suffered from them; he only hunted deer, but we are not informed by the worthy Shepherd that he ever stole them.

The fact is, that exercise was essential to his health, and in combining it with field-sports, he gave the charm of a manly and wholesome recreation to what might be considered a duty to his constitution. If there be an antidote to the toil of composition it is exercise; and if there be a preventive of the ills which literary flesh is heir to, it is regimen. Scott well knew the advantages of both, but most sadly are they overlooked by authors in general. An hour or two in the afternoon devoted to a few calls on their friends is deemed sufficient for the reparation of nervous energy, exhausted by the unintermitting labour of six or seven hours; they feel they are unequal to fatigue, for muscular strength is the barometer of the vital powers, and therefore the employment of the locomotive organs is wholly neglected. If the night is devoted to mental application, the morning makes amends for the hours which have been stolen from the natural period of repose, and what matters it whether the moon or the noonday sun presides over their slumbers? It unfortunately matters much more than they imagine; they devote their nervous energies to the greatest of all labours at a period when all nature is deprived of the vivifying principle which animates every object in the animal or vegetable kingdom, and "steep their senses in

forgetfulness," when every thing that has life around them is receiving a new and more lively sentiment of existence, from the influence of those beams whose electrical phenomena are more analogous to those of life, than any that we are acquainted with. If the employment of the pen of such persons is dignified by the name of an elegant pursuit, which is supposed to soften the manners, and to refine the taste of the votaries of science, they deem it better to become its martyrs, than to share with the illiterate or the vulgar the blessing of rude health.

If the spirits at length become wearied by incessant application, if even during their meals the nervous energy is summoned to the brain from every other organ, especially from those where its influence is most requisite for the due performance of the process of digestion; if the appetite begins to fail, the temper to be soured, the sensibility to be morbidly increased, and that the labour of the closet, in the words of Rousseau, "*Les rends délicats, affaiblit leur tempérament, et que l'âme garde difficilement sa vigueur, quand le corps a perdu la sienne; que l'étude use la machine, equisse les esprits, détruit les forces, énerve le courage, rend pusillanime, incapable de résister également à la peine, et aux passions;*" nothing is to be added to the demonstration of the dangers that surround their health and happiness. Yet are these premonitory symptoms of disease, of morbid irritability of the organs of digestion, of hypochondria, and all its horrors, wholly neglected and overlooked. If they have only strength enough to pursue the avocation which insidiously undermines their constitution, they dream not that disease is a possible occurrence so long as bodily pain is not endured: they know not that the fiercest paroxysm of

hypochondria, the severest attacks of dyspepsia, are seldom accompanied by physical sufferings. But if they are reminded by the dejection of their spirits, or the diminution of bodily strength, of the injury their health has sustained, and is daily sustaining, from the over-exertion of one organ, and the total inactivity of every other, then indeed they have recourse to the physician, or rather to the faculty, for they commonly travel through every sign in the zodiac of privileged empiricism, from the balance, the sign in which the daily allowance of bread and meat is doled out to the invalid, to Aquarius, the sign of the water-gruel system, where the advantages of thin potations are magnified, and extolled "to the very echo that doth applaud again." If they go still further, and knock at the door of Ursa Major, they will probably find the Great Bear of the profession hugging his own doctrine to death, and in the midst of many ungainly gambols, extending his great paw over an ample volume, and dismissing his visitors with a good-natured growl—the customary intimation to go about their business, and read his book. And accordingly, they go at the first growl and read "the book," and swallow blue pills every night, and black draughts every morning, till some new star in the medical constellation out-twinkles the old bear, and it becomes the fashion to consult the last discovered luminary.

But, in sober seriousness, the use of powerful remedies in disorders of the stomach, is seldom followed by a more than temporary relief: eventually their effects are injurious; how can they be otherwise, when injudiciously employed, or the principle mistaken on which they are recommended, or that principle too general in its application to meet every peculiarity of age, condi-

tion, and constitution? "*Ætatem aliam, aliud factum convenit*," says Plautus, but not so the fashionable dietetic doctor; there is but one mode of treatment for the innumerable and dissimilar symptoms of a disease; no matter whether the patient is young or old, male or female, of a sanguine or a saturnine temperament, of a vigorous or a debilitated constitution—no matter where the seat of the disorder be, the head, the stomach, or the liver, he is doomed to go through the same undeviating routine either of blue pill and black draught, of carbonate of soda, or subcarbonate of iron; and if the remedies, like the torture of Procrustes, are not fitted to the sufferer, the sufferer is fitted to the remedies—that is to say, the feeble powers of his constitution are habituated to them. But verily and truly, we believe that more injury is done by medicine to dyspeptic patients, than would arise to the constitution from its total non-employment. The celebrated Hufeland carries this notion to a far greater extent, and applies it to the whole range of chronic maladies, without impugning the character of that profession of which he is one of the brightest ornaments in Germany.

CHAPTER XLII.

SIR WALTER SCOTT CONTINUED.

The fault in a great measure lies in the victims of the malady we are speaking of—the literary malady; they are generally heedless enough of present health, but anxious in the extreme about prospective and imaginary ills. Forthcoming evils are continually casting their shadows before them, and every feeling of malaise is magnified by fear into a symptom of some serious disorder. The consequence is, on trivial occasions they are continually having recourse to unnecessary and even injurious medicines; either, volatile ammonia, spirituous tinctures, carminatives, and ultimately laudanum,—are the remedies which “nervous people” constantly have recourse to; but again and again do we repeat it, there is no antidote but exercise for the disorders of the studious, and no preventive but regimen. By these only may the effects of excessive study be obviated and new vigour infused into the constitution, so as to enable it to sustain for any length of time the daily toil of mental labour. Sydenham has given a very imposing and somewhat scholastic account of his regimen, which appears certainly not to have been remarkably abstemious; but to its regularity the good effects are due which Sydenham ascribes to it. “In the morning when I arise, I drink a dish or two of tea, and then ride in my coach till noon; when I return home I immediately refresh myself with any sort of

meat, of easy digestion, that I like, (for moderation is necessary above all things.) I drink somewhat more than a quarter of a pint of Canary wine immediately before dinner every day, to promote my digestion, and to drive the gout from my bowels. When I have dined, I betake myself to my coach again, and when business will permit, I ride into the country for good air. A draught of small beer is to me instead of a supper, and I take another draught when I am in bed, and about to compose myself to sleep."

"There is a wisdom," says Bacon, "in regimen, beyond the rules of physic. A man's own observation of what he finds good, and what he finds hurtful, is the best medicine to preserve health. Celsus could never have spoken it as a physician had he not been a wise man, when he gives it as one of the great precepts of health, that a man do vary and interchange contraries, but with an inclination to the more benign extreme; to use fasting and full eating, but rather full eating; watching and sleep, but rather sleep; sitting and exercise, but rather exercise; so shall nature be cherished, and yet taught mysteries."

"Beyond the general rules of low moderate diet," says Heberden, "which every practitioner must be acquainted with, all people best know what agrees with them, and can ascertain it as well, if not better, than the doctor."

Every man, indeed, of common sense is the best judge of his own digestion, and every thing that agrees with it he may safely conclude is good for him; he has no need of diet books to regulate his mode of living. To make general laws for the diet of individuals, to legislate for the stomach, and for each legislator to lay down particular rules and ordinances at variance with his neighbours,

for one to issue his fiat against farinaceous food in every instance, and another to preach up a medical crusade against all vegetable substances: for a third to obtest mankind by the love they bear their lives to abstain from wine; and a fourth to sing peans (not perhaps quite so poetical as "O fons Blandusisæ,") in praise of water; this is, indeed, to suppose that one set of rules is applicable to every form of a disease, or that the same organ at all times is in the same condition, and similarly affected at different periods, and under different circumstances, by the same agents.

In a word, a popular diet-book, based on such a presumption, is the mere impertinence of physic. We may conclude with old Burton, that in what regards our regimen, "our own experience is the best physician; so great is the variety of palates, humours, and temperaments, that every man should observe, and be a law unto himself. Tiberius, we are told by Tacitus, did laugh at all those who, after thirty years of age, asked counsel of others concerning matters of diet."

At forty, says the adage, a man is either a fool or a physician; but at any age the individual is likely to become a valetudinarian for life, who lives by medicine, and not by regimen.

We have been carried away from our subject, but our observations are not perhaps altogether irrelevant to it, nor wholly unimportant to our readers. The unbroken vigour of Scott's constitution throughout the greater portion of a life of literary labour, was unquestionably owing to the regularity and temperance of his habits, and to wholesome exercise. But without that exercise, even the "*ventrem bene moratum*," which Seneca proclaims the advantages of, would not have been sufficient for the

preservation of his health, or the reparation of the vigour that was exhausted in his study.

The common error of the studious was not his, of devoting day after day, or night after night to some literary pursuit, and of wearying out the body in the constant service of the indefatigable mind: "of compelling (as Plutarch observes) that which is mortal to do as much as that which is immortal; that which is earthly, as that which is ethereal." Scott's regular recreations, on the contrary, put the body in a state to obey the suggestions of the stronger and the nobler part. Not an hour did he occupy himself in planting or embellishing his grounds, not a morning did he allot to the pleasures of the chase, nor set apart a portion of his leisure for a joyous ramble in the country, that he did not return from the "*deambulatio per amœna loca*," with recruited spirits, for the encounter of new toil, and invigorated powers that had shaken off the temporary senectitude of study.

In many points the habits of Milton resembled those of Scott; he was no less temperate, no less sober-minded, but unfortunately the acrimony of party strife sometimes steeped his pen in bitterness approaching to malevolence. The sufferings, however, of a painful malady, might have had not a little to do with the asperity of his politics. The labour moreover of composition, as might be expected from the nature of his productions, was intense, and frequently deprived him of repose. "He would oftentimes," says Richardson, "lie awake whole nights together, but not a verse could he make; at other times he would dictate perhaps forty lines in a breath, and then reduce them to half the number. He held an absurd opinion that his poetic vein never flowed happily, but from the vernal to the autumnal equinox, and that the

coldness of this climate was unfavourable to the flights of his imagination. Till his infirmities confined him to the house, he was in the daily habit of taking exercise in his garden, but in the intervals of his gouty pain, being unable to leave his room, he used to swing in a chair, and sometimes play on an organ; and even this mode of exercise most people will deem preferable to that of Lord Monboddo, who for the sake of his health was accustomed to rise every morning at four o'clock, and then walk about his room, divested of his habiliments, with the window open, for the purpose of enjoying what he called his air bath. But Johnson's idea of exercise was certainly a more agreeable one than either Milton's or Monboddo's; he told Boswell with becoming gravity, "that if he had no duties here, and no reference to futurity, he would spend his life in driving briskly in a post-chaise with a pretty woman." But, much as we admire the doctor's taste, we rather believe that Scott's mode of taking exercise was the more salubrious of the two.

Those "*labores hilares venandi*," (as Camden terms the field sports of Staffordshire,) which Scott took delight in, were more likely to produce the effect which Galen has so strongly pointed out the beneficial results of: the promotion of pleasurable excitement by the general diffusion of the animal spirits, as it were, over the whole frame; by the use of exercise, till the whole body tingles with the glow of incipient perspiration—"usque ad ruborem, sed non ad sudorem." This is indeed the grand point that is to be observed in taking exercise—to take as much as the individual is capable of bearing without fatigue.

It is a folly to think that the necessity for bodily activity may be superseded by means of medicine, or regi-

men, or habits, in other respects the best regulated in the world. Exercise is, indeed, indispensable to health; and without health ask the sick man where is happiness, and he may tell you, at least, where it is not, when he points to his own bosom.

But how is exercise to be taken by those who dwell in the busy haunts of the literary world—who are confined to their closets by their pursuits the greater part of the day, or without necessity indulge their literary indolence in the immurement of their study, with the same feelings of veneration for its imprisonment which King James gave such eloquent words to, when he visited the library of Sir Thomas Bodley: "If I were doomed to be a prisoner, and the choice were given me of my prison, this library should be my dungeon; I would desire to be chained by no other bonds than the clasps which incarcerate these pages, and to have no other companions in my captivity than these volumes." How then are the studious to escape from their fascinating pursuits, to devote even an hour to bodily exercise? The first law of nature is said to be self-preservation—the first law of life is motion—its most essential requisite, activity. "Do not be inactive," says the Arab poet, El Wardi, "for water becomes putrid by stagnation, and the moon, by changing, becomes bright and perfect."

CHAPTER XLIII.

SIR WALTER SCOTT CONTINUED.

The same idea, but somewhat amplified, is found in "the Anatomy of Melancholy," in an argument for the necessity of exercise: "The heavens themselves run continually round; the world is never still; the sun travels to the east and to the west; the moon is ever changing in its course; the stars and the planets have their constant motions; the air we breathe is continually agitated by the wind, and the waters never cease to ebb and flow: doubtless, for the purpose of their conservation, to teach us that we should ever be in action." The ancients had so much faith in the good effects of exercise, that many of their disorders were treated solely by medical gymnastics. Germanicus was cured of an atrophy by riding, Cicero of a grievous infirmity by travelling. The Roman physicians sent their consumptive patients to Alexandria, and the Greeks shipped their nervous ones to Anticyra—nominally for change of air, but really for the advantages of exercise and recreation. The father of physic was the first who introduced medical gymnastics into practice; he described various sorts of these exercises, but those on which he placed most dependence were friction of the whole frame—somewhat similar to the process of shampooing, and a swinging motion of the hands and arms. The advantages of both modes of promoting the insensible secretion of the skin, and of maintaining the bodily vi-

gour, by the activity of almost every muscle, are but too little known, and consequently but little practised. And not the least advantage of such modes of exercise is, that every one may employ them, whatever be his occupation, or however constantly confined to the house.

The literary man, who has a horror of the feral amusements of the field, or who thinks a ride on horseback, or a ramble on foot, more fatiguing than the weariness of the soft-cushioned elbow-chair, in which the worst weariness of life is often felt, will find in these employments a salubrious occupation, an invigorating exercise, even in his closet. No in-door activity is indeed comparable to that which is taken in the open air ; but unquestionably health may be preserved, and strength maintained for a very long period, by devoting ten minutes, night and morning, to those frictions Hippocrates so strongly recommends, and which are to this day in such general use in those eastern countries, where they are not half so essential to health, as they are in colder climates ; and likewise by the occasional use, at least every fourth or fifth hour, of that other mode of exercise which has been described, or what perhaps is still better, of employing it in that manner in which sailors are accustomed to exercise their arms in cold weather.

The chest, which has been contracted and compressed by a hurtful posture, is expanded by the vigorous action of the muscles ; in fact the whole of them are called into active exercise by it.

This form of medical gymnastics, with the windows of the apartments thrown open while it is employed, and a few brisk turns in the chamber, if unfortunately no garden is at hand, is, indeed, the only substitute for

those recreations which combine the advantages of wholesome air with the charms of delightful scenery.

The thews and sinews of the brawny blacksmith, who stirs not more than one day in seven from the precincts of his forge, to a certain extent illustrates the invigorating effects of this sort of exercise ; and we are persuaded that the exemption of the people of the East from many European disorders, from gout, dyspepsia, and phthisis, is not wholly due to the peculiarity of climate, or to temperate habits, but in a great measure to the process of shampooing, either in the bath, to which the latter is subservient, or in their private houses, in which it is every day in use.

In all probability the mode of applying friction by means of the flesh-brush in this country, has caused it to fall into such general disuse—it is neither efficient nor agreeable ; a simple glove, made of common white drugget, without divisions at the fingers except for the thumb, as the woollen mittens of children are commonly made, is the best thing that can be used for the extremities ; and a common flesh-brush, covered with the same material, with a handle about fifteen inches in length, is by far the most convenient and effectual mode of applying friction to the body. We are so thoroughly convinced of the utility of the chafing glove, that however misplaced the mention of its advantages may seem to be in these pages, we still most strenuously venture to recommend its employment to those who have most need of exercise, and least inclination, or perhaps opportunity, to take it ; to those who are deprived, by their pursuits, of that insensible secretion of the skin, which is essential to health, and the obstruction of which, (as we have seen

in the case of the unfortunate Cowper,) is frequently the cause of the gravest maladies which afflict humanity.

So few of the infirmities of genius were the portion of Sir Walter Scott, that if we have wandered from our subject, it is because there is hardly an untoward circumstance in the fortunate career of this great man up to a late period of his life, which is calculated to illustrate the argument which it was the aim of the preceding pages to establish. But though there are few errors of conduct to be noticed, and still fewer physical infirmities to be connected with them, no indulgence to be demanded for the one, and no charitable feelings to be appealed to for the other, there is still a moral in the secret of his happiness to be found in the record of his virtues, his moderated passions, and well regulated habits, which has the strong persuasion of an admirable example to recommend it in lieu of the awful lesson of a life of error, and of suffering for the enforcement of a warning.

The period, however, arrived when fortune began to weary of her smiles, and the long unclouded horizon of Sir Walter became darkened by adversity. He had unfortunately connected himself with the house of Constable, and the failure of that house was the means of involving his affairs in what might have been considered irretrievable ruin. This disastrous circumstance is plainly and succinctly described in the notice that is prefixed to the Abbotsford subscription, but with, perhaps, a pardonable leaning to the imprudence which led to the calamity.

"The crisis which took place in commercial affairs generally, and which particularly affected every person engaged in literary undertakings, involved Sir Walter

Scott in losses alike unexpected and unprepared for, to the amount of 120,000*l*. Ruinous as this demand must have been, it is yet obvious, that after surrendering, to its payment, the whole of his property, he might have secured to himself and his family the fruits of his subsequent exertions, and realised from his later works not less than 70,000*l*. The whole of this sum, with whatever more a lengthened life might have enabled him to obtain, he with manly and conscientious feeling appropriated to the benefit of his creditors. In thus devoting his talents to the acquittal of obligations not originally, though legally his own, he laboured with a degree of assiduity, and an intenseness of anxiety, which shortened his existence by overstrained intellectual exertion."

It is only to be wondered at, how a sober-minded man (which Scott unquestionably was) could have been so incautious as to have entangled his fortune in the speculations of his publishers; but in all probability, the mania of building, embellishing, planting, and collecting objects of antiquity, (which led to an expense exceeding fifty thousand pounds,) was the cause of his embarrassment, by compelling him to have recourse to other plausible means of increasing his income than those of literary emoluments, immense as his were.

In the five years that succeeded the bankruptcy of Constable, from 1826 to 1831, he produced no less than one and thirty volumes, the profits of which, and of the new edition of his novels, which amount to the surprising number of seventy-four volumes, were devoted to the diminution of his debt, and by his indefatigable literary labours, (almost exclusively,) he was enabled to pay off fifty-four thousand pounds. His life had been ensured

in favour of his creditors, for twenty-two thousand pounds. Further payments out of his personal property still further reduced that debt, so that the whole does not now exceed twenty thousand pounds. From the period of his embarrassments it was evident Sir Walter was writing less for the public than for his creditors, but unfortunately more for either than for his fame. From the publication of his last novel in 1826, every succeeding work was a fainter emanation of his extraordinary genius, and perhaps the last of his productions was the feeblest gleam of its departing glory.

"The prodigious labours," says the author of the admirable sketch of his life in the Penny Magazine, "which these numerous and voluminous works necessarily required, was too much, however, even for the most ready intellect and robust frame. The present writer, when he saw Sir Walter for the last time, in 1830, was struck by the change which a comparatively short period had produced in his personal appearance. A few years previously he looked a hale and active man in middle life—now at the age of sixty, he appeared at least ten or twelve years older. When told of the death of a gentleman of his acquaintance, by paralysis, a few days previously, he appeared much struck, and made a remark which seemed to indicate some secret apprehension in his own mind, of the fatal malady that was then lurking in his own over-wrought mind." At length the springs of life, so long over-tasked, began to give way. During the ensuing winter, (1831,) symptoms of gradual paralysis, (a disease, it seems of which his father had also died, but at an advanced age,) began to be manifested. His lameness became more distressing, and his utterance began to be obviously affected. Yet even in

this afflicting and ominous condition he contrived to work with undiminished diligence. During the summer of 1831, he grew gradually worse; his medical attendants strictly forbade mental exertion, yet he could not be restrained from composition. In the autumn, a visit to Italy was recommended; he was with difficulty prevailed on to leave Scotland, but at length he yielded to the entreaties of his friends, and sailed in the following October. His health seemed improved by the voyage, but after visiting Naples and Rome, at both of which cities he was received with almost regal honours, his desire to return to his native land became irrepressible, and he hurried homeward with a rapidity, which in his state of health was highly injurious, and doubtless accelerated the catastrophe which perhaps no degree of skill or caution could have long delayed. He experienced a further severe attack (a second paralytic seizure) in passing down the Rhine, and reached London in nearly the last stage of physical and mental prostration. Medical aid could only, it was found, for a short period protract dissolution; and to gratify his most ardent dying wish, he was conveyed by the steam packet to Leith, and once more reached his favourite house at Abbotsford—but in such a pitiable condition that he no longer recognised his nearest and dearest relations. After lingering in this deplorable state till, in the progress of this melancholy malady—this living death—mortification had been some time proceeding in different parts of the mortal frame—he expired without a struggle, on the 21st of September 1832, in his sixty-second year.”

CHAPTER XLIV.

SIR WALTER SCOTT CONTINUED.

We have a few observations to make on the nature of the malady which terminated the existence of this great and good man, without entering into any medical disquisition on the subject, but simply for the purpose of directing the attention of the general reader to a malady which literary men are more subject to than persons of any other avocation.

How many instances are recorded in the obituary of genius of the fatal visitation of this humiliating disease! How many awful examples of its power and its tyranny, not only over life but over all the ennobling attributes of humanity! The angel of death hovers not over the head of a man in so terrible a form; the blow is struck, and he who was but yesterday the master-spirit of his age, "the foremost man of all the world," is to-day the object of its pity, the living emblem of life and death, a melancholy spectacle of the light of intellect fading into fatuity—of vitality and death,—or at least, the semblance of each in the corresponding members of the same body. Who can contemplate the fearful phenomena of power and immobility, of animation and the extinction of its attributes in the same form, and the sad exhibition of a great man's mind, tottering on the ruins of its lofty throne, and eventually brought down, "quite, quite down," to the level of the lowest capacity, without feeling the

pride of reason confounded at the sight, and the softer feelings of nature utterly overpowered?

It is indeed "a sorry sight," but yet is it one which the friends of the martyrs to literary glory but too frequently have to witness. Copernicus, Petrarch, Linnæus, Lord Clarendon, Rousseau, Marmontel, Richardson, Steele, Phillips, Harvey, Reid, Johnson, Porson, Dr. Wollaston and Scott, are a few of the many eminent names of those who have fallen victims to excessive mental application, by paralysis or apoplexy. Are the generality of literary men sufficiently acquainted with the nature of this disorder to be able to discern its premonitory symptoms, and to obviate or diminish those predisposing causes which lead to it? We believe they are not; or if they are acquainted with its characteristics, the frequency of such attacks, unattended as they are by immediate dissolution, causes them to under-rate the importance of familiar facts, to extenuate the peril of an evil of too common occurrence, but which it is very possible to avoid, though it may not be so to remove the effects of, if once they have occurred.

Those maladies which arise from a disturbance of the nervous functions of the brain, have not only a common character, but in a great measure an intimate connection. Apoplexy and palsy, epilepsy and hysteria, hypochondria and mania, though they stand not in the relation of cause or effect, are at least modifications of disease, arising from a morbid condition of the nervous system, and generally connected with functional disorder in the digestive organs. The three distinguishing characters of epilepsy, apoplexy, and palsy, are convulsion, coma, and loss of voluntary motion.

But all of these disorders are referred by medical

writers to one common source, namely, pressure on the delicate substance of the brain, arising either from a fullness of the vessels of the head, or a rupture of them; but at all events, to a plethoric state of the brain, either chronic or acute and accidental. But we are strongly inclined to believe that this doctrine with respect to palsy, in the great majority of cases in which paralysis is the consequence of excessive mental application, is not only erroneous, but the treatment which is founded on it worse than ineffectual—even highly injurious.

The paralytic seizure in the cases we allude to, supervenes on the exhaustion of mind and body, and its conquest is over the ruins of a broken-down constitution; and so far from originating in a plethoric condition of the circulating system, *its origin, we believe, and every day's experience confirms the conviction, is an imperfect supply of blood to the brain, and an irregular distribution of it.* Under such circumstances, general blood-letting would certainly be an objectionable remedy—under all circumstances we fear that it is resorted to, at least on the onset, without discrimination, and without advantage. No matter whether the patient is of a sanguineous or a saturnine temperament; of a vigorous or an enervated constitution; blood-letting, even to the abstraction of pounds of this vital fluid, is fearlessly recommended to be adopted in cases wherein the principle of vitality is already half extinguished.

There may be, indeed few cases of paralysis in which any mode of treatment has the power of preventing the recurrence of an attack eventually fatal. But we have seen many instances in which its recurrence has been prevented for a period of many years, and the patient, in the interval between the first and second seizure,

left in the enjoyment of tolerable health, where the very opposite mode of treatment has been used : where the diffusible stimulants, and aromatic tonics, and aperients, had been exhibited from the commencement, combined with the strictest regularity of regimen without abstemiousness, for even generous living is compatible with the rules of a well-ordered regimen.

From Mr. Savory, formerly of Bond-street, we remember to have heard an account, eight or nine years ago, of a friend of his, a baronet, well-known in the gay world, having been seized with paralysis, and finding himself, on his return from a convivial party, suddenly deprived of speech, and the power of moving one side of his body. Either from feelings of desperation, or an impulse of mental aberration, the gentleman had a bottle of port wine brought to his bed-side, and having finished it, he turned with great composure on his side and went to sleep. That gentleman is now living, his intellect wholly unimpaired, his speech restored, and his general health as good as it ever was ; and he still daily discusses his bottle or two of port wine with apparent impunity.

Few, we imagine, would have the folly, or the recklessness of life which this gentleman exhibited, to think, under similar circumstances, of following his example ; we would not recommend them : our only wonder is, that in this instance it was not fatal. But nevertheless, how can we reconcile the impunity with which this powerful stimulant was taken at such a moment, with the notion of the malady arising from a plethoric condition of the cerebral vessels ?

Dr. Powell, in an elaborate paper in the college transactions, has brought forward a mass of evidence, to prove that paralytic affections, both partial and general, do

frequently originate in a peculiar condition of the nerves alone : that they are independent of any morbid affection of the blood-vessels of the head, and that they are produced either by sympathy with irritability of the stomach, or the sudden impression of cold on the surface of the body. If this hypothesis be correct, which there is great reason to believe—namely, that it is a nervous, and not a vascular disorder—the inutility of treating it on the principle of an inflammatory or plethoric state of the latter system is obvious, and the necessity of considering it as a disturbance of the nervous system, occasioned by the depression of its energies, and followed by an imperfect supply of blood to the brain, and an unequal distribution of it, is no less evident ; and these observations will not be without advantage if one medical man is induced to pause, before he has recourse to the lancet, in the treatment of a malady which is incidental to the exhausted vigour of a shattered constitution.

Palsy and apoplexy are so closely connected, that they stand in the relation of cause and effect ; still is it difficult to say which is the precursor and which the consequence. Palsy, however, is generally looked upon as a minor degree of apoplexy, and its attacks, says Dr. Gregory, in his most admirable work on the practice of physic, is commonly preceded for several days, or even weeks, by some of the symptoms which are the forerunners of apoplexy, such as giddiness, drowsiness, numbness, dimness of sight, failure of the powers of mind, forgetfulness, and indistinctness of articulation.

But the facts which have perplexed physicians for ages remain in the same condition as they were left by Hippocrates twenty-one centuries ago. The reason why the power of sensation should remain perfect while that

of voluntary motion is wholly lost is still a mystery ; why the loss of that motion should be on the right-hand side of the body, while the injury in the brain, either from effusion or hæmorrhage, is on the left ; and *vice versa*, on the left of the body when the pressure is on the right, we know not ; we surmise, it may arise from the decussation of the nervous fibres, but we are unable to trace it. Why the senses should be hardly affected, while the mental faculties are invariably impaired, we cannot tell ; we only know, that the mind which was once powerful and resolute, becomes weak and timid. The post mortem examination of those who have died of paralysis, has thrown no additional light on our knowledge of its nature. When paralysis quickly terminates in apoplexy, the ordinary appearances of the latter disorder are met with, the rupture of a vessel and serous or sanguineous extravasation ; but in palsy of long standing the morbid appearance in the brain may be a discolouration of the striated portion, and a corresponding softness of its substance, serous effusions in the ventricles : but in a vast number of cases no preternatural appearance whatever is to be observed, except a flaccidity of the substance of the brain.

This was the appearance which the brain of Sir Walter Scott presented on the post mortem examination : the whole left side of the medullary substance was found in a soft and flaccid state, and globules of water were found distributed over the surface of the same side. In all probability his excessive application went on slowly producing this mischief in the brain during the last five or six years of his existence, when he was driven by his pecuniary embarrassments to literary labour, which was too much for the strength of any human being.

CHAPTER XLV.

CONCLUSION.

With the last of the preceding notices we conclude these pages. In glancing at such parts of the biography of Pope, Johnson, Burns, Cowper, Byron, and Scott, as seemed to be connected with the history of their health, we endeavoured to point out its influence on the mind of each, and to show how far the power of disease had controlled the conduct, or chequered the career, of most of them.

The object we had in view was to rescue the character of men of genius from the unmerited severity which it daily encounters at the hands of shallow criticism, and also from the unmitigated censure which is bestowed upon its imperfections by the enmity of invidious ignorance.

How far we may have succeeded in the attempt, will be determined by the fate of this little work ; but whatever that may be, the least partial of our judges cannot deem more humbly of the ability displayed in these pages to do justice to such a subject than we do. And we are well aware, that we have barely touched on many an important topic connected with that subject, which in abler hands might have afforded sufficient matter for its ample illustration.

But, however briefly and imperfectly our task has been accomplished, we have at least the consolation of feeling that no other but a laudable motive induced us to undertake it, and we have the greatest of all literary authori-

ties for the opinion that great enterprises are laudable, even when they are above the strength that undertakes them.

Had we known of any other English work of a similar tendency, the present one would probably have never seen the light. Tissot's admirable treatise, "*Avis aux Gens des Lettres*," so far as it goes, leaves nothing to be desired on the subject of the health of studious people. But of all who have written on the subject of the literary character, Currie, to our mind, in his brief life of Burns, has evinced the best knowledge of his subject. After Currie, and only not before him, because the light of medical philosophy was wanting to the "*Anatomy of Melancholy*," Burton deserves to rank. And next to these, the author of the "*Curiosities of Literature*" would probably have ranked, had the advantages, which both the others derived from their professions, been his; had he the same opportunity of tracing the analogies of mental and physical infirmities—or of speculating like Burton, daily and hourly on the effects of the latter, and of the influence of the literary malady in his own person, on the chief mental faculties. Our opinion, however, of the excellence of these authors, is to be gathered in the preceding pages from the frequent reference we have made to their works, and which, if we have failed in any instance to have acknowledged, we have done so from inadvertency.

But there is one motive we have had in view, which we did not think it necessary to parade before the reader at the outset of his perusal of these pages—namely, the opportunity which a literary subject of general interest afforded, of introducing here and there some medical observations, of sufficient importance to every

literary person to deserve attention, though unfortunately of too little interest, in the form of a dry disquisition on a medical topic at any length, to engage it.

It was, therefore, our object to convey information of a medical kind, on many subjects connected with the infirmities of genius, without seeming so to do, or at least without wearying the attention of the general reader with details on any subject of a professional character. This we trust we have accomplished, and in making the lives of those eminent persons we have made choice of, the vehicle of opinions respecting the health of literary men, and its influence on their happiness: we humbly hope the delicacy of that subject has not been forgotten, and that in endeavouring to vindicate the literary character, there is nothing to be found in "The Infirmities of Genius" which the moralist at least may have to censure.

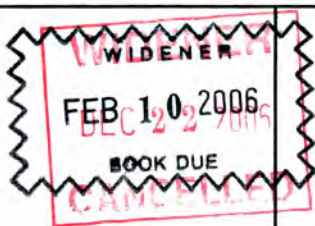
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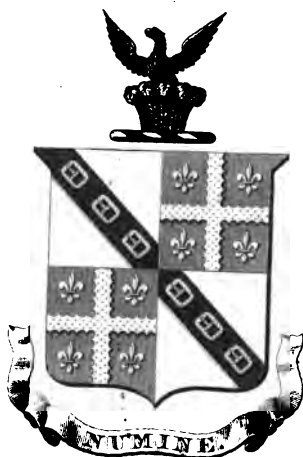


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